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BELMONT LODGE.

A NOVEL.

BRITISH MUSEUM
15 APR 60

BELMONT LODGE.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

HARRIET JONES,

OF

MAIDSTONE.

"Whoever thinks a faultleſs piece to ſee,
"Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er ſhall be.
"In ev'ry work regard the writer's end,
"Since none can compaſs more than they intend;
"And if the means be juſt, the conduct true,
"Applauſe, in ſpite of trivial faults, is due."

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BELMONT LODGE.

CHAP. I.

LADY MONTGOMERY daily recovered, and was ſhortly pronounced entirely out of danger by the phyſician who attended her; though Montgomery could not but entertain ſuſpicions that her health was too ſpeedily reſtored, to be radically cured; thinking it would prove like a new houſe, built upon an old foundation, which, ſoon giving way, would tumble into ruins. Theſe thoughts, however, hourly gave ground, and he at length went ſo far as to write to Captain Macartney, unknown to his father, requeſting him to ſend him notice, without loſs of time, whenever he heard of any gentleman wiſhing to ſell out, either in his, or any other regiment of Regulars.

Sir Hugh, who was fearful that the reſtoration of Lady Montgomery's health would be the ſignal for his ſon to put his ſchemes of joining the Army in execution, would frequently expreſs a wiſh, when they were ſitting together over the bottle, (the one dictated by inclination, the other by complaiſance), that he would overcome his antipathy to marriage, and ſelect a young lady from amongſt his acquaintance, on whom he could beſtow, without any great degree of reluctance, the name of Montgomery. If he found his ſon inclined to liſten patiently to theſe converſations, he would venture to recommend Miſs Belmont; having once heard him ſay, that her character, as a female, he could not but eſteem. But if Montgomery declared that he ſhould never marry Miſs Belmont, however highly he might admire or eſteem

her,

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her, he would entreat him to make choice of any other; at the ſame time aſſuring him that he would not object either to birth, or fortune, ſo as they were not ſo far beneath his own, as to reflect diſgrace or diſhonour upon the family of Montgomery.

Finding all the arguments he could advance in favour of marriage were inſtantly defeated by his ſon, as he had deprived himſelf of the power of reinforcing them by any corroborating proofs, he one day told him, (after being quite out of patience at having all his argumentative reaſonings, and what he conceived were clear and incontrovertible proofs, ſo repeatedly confuted), that his only remaining wiſh was to ſee him happily ſettled, that his reflections might no longer be embittered with the cruel ſuppoſition that it was his imprudent conduct which prevented him from fulfilling the neceſſary duties of a good Chriſtian, in thoſe enjoined in the different characters of a tender huſband, and an affectionate father.

ther. Sir Hugh impreſſively added, at the ſame time knocking the decayed embers from his tobacco pipe—

"You cannot tell what happineſs you would impart to my heart, wounded by domeſtic infelicity, and that diſſonance which has put my temper ſo completely out of tune for theſe two or three years paſt, if you would but marry!"

Montgomery ſhook his head, ſilently ſignifying that he demanded an impoſſibility; when Sir Hugh proceeded, ſaying, he would immediately employ a conveyancer to make over the eſtates to him, if he would but bring home a miſtreſs for them, and retire himſelf to a neat little purchaſe he had juſt made; conſiſting of a well-built cottage, with ſuitable offices, which his workmen were now employed in beautifying; an extenſive orchard, three meadows, and fiſh ponds. Though inflexible in his determinations, Montgomery was greatly affected at his father's affectionate, generous, and diſintereſted offer; but, ſighing "It cannot be!" he preſſed his father's hand with grateful fervour, and withdrew.

Sir Hugh perceiving all his endeavours to make his ſon coincide with his wiſhes were ineffectual, reſolved he would no more entreat him to change the bent of his inclinations, but truſt to time and opportunity for effecting his purpoſe; hoping that, directed by chance, Montgomery might one day meet with a lady deſtined to remove his cares and his prejudices.

In talking of the Belmont family to his ſiſter Emmeline, Montgomery took great delight; when (if they were alone) his converſation generally turned upon Anna, whoſe virtues, penſive beauty, merits, and accompliſhments, formed a vaſt fund of converſation. In theſe diſcourſes Emmeline would ſometimes liſten very attentively, narrowly watching his countenance, in which ſhe had not yet diſcovered any ſymptoms that might authorize her to declare he loved; at other times ſhe would exhauſt her ſprightly

vivacity,

vivacity, in hopes of creating a conſcious bluſh on his cheek, that might unveil his heart; at the ſame time proteſting he had left it in Love's ſilken fetters at Belmont, and had given it to Anna, that he might not ſtand a chance of loſing it on her friend Euphraſia:—but he never betrayed any ſymptoms of the paſſion, and ſhe feared he would ever remain a ſtranger to it.

She had, one morning, inſenſibly turned the converſation upon Anna, and he was anſwering her queſtions very diſpaſſionately;—ſhe happened to mention her ill ſtate of health, when the dread of being the cauſe of it raiſed an unuſual glow in his face, which did not eſcape the penetrating eyes of Emmeline, for ſhe immediately aſked him whether he did not think ſlighted love might occaſion it. A laconic negative was the only anſwer ſhe could obtain; for Montgomery, not chuſing to be interrogated on ſuch a ſubject, pretended an indiſpenſable engagement, and left Emmeline to draw whatever inference ſhe pleaſed from his line of conduct.

Converſing ſo frequently of Anna made her very often the ſubject of his meditations, and when in company with other young ladies, he could not fail to make compariſons greatly to her advantage: theſe tended but to make her more conſpicuouſly preeminent in every feminine virtue. Thus did every combining circumſtance conſpire to heighten his eſteem for her.

Three weeks had nearly elapſed ſince his return from Belmont Lodge, and he began to be very uneaſy at not receiving any news from Percival; when, as he was ſitting at the breakfaſt table with his family, his anxiety was for a moment diſſipated by the entrance of his ſervant with a letter, which, on opening, he perceived came from the identical correſpondent. Emmeline wiſhed very much to ſee its contents, as ſhe obſerved his countenance change a little whilſt peruſing it; but he, unmindful of her hints, folded it up, and put it in his pocket, confirming her in her ſuſpicions that it was not of the moſt pleaſant nature, by ſaying he did not chuſe any more breakfaſt.

His ſervant ſoon after entered, ſeemingly in great haſte; and, placing a ſmall packet on the table by his ſide, ſaid it had juſt come expreſs from London, and that the man who brought it, was below, waiting for his anſwer. Montgomery haſtily broke it open, and found it contained a letter from Captain Macartney, ſtating that there was a regiment of Regulars quartered in their neighbourhood, which had received orders from the War Office to march immediately to Portſmouth, where veſſels were to be ready to take them on board, to convey them to the Weſt Indies; in conſequence of which orders, he had received a letter from one of the Enſigns, an acquaintance of his, expreſſing a wiſh to part with his commiſſion, if it were poſſible to procure a purchaſer on ſo ſhort a notice.—Captain Macartney had, therefore, agreeable to Montgomery's gomery's deſire, ſent an immediate expreſs, ſaying, if he returned an affirmative, he would tranſact the buſineſs for him; but begged that if he meant to be the purchaſer, he would follow the expreſs without loſs of time, as the preſſing urgency of the affair made his preſence immediately neceſſary.

"Archy," ſaid Sir Hugh, "that letter ſeems to give you infinite ſatisfaction."

"It does, my dear Sir," ſaid Montgomery, preſenting it to his father, whilſt his manly features glowed with an animation expreſſive of delight; "and I ſincerely hope it may meet with your concurring ſentiments of approbation."

Sir Hugh took it from his hand, and read it in ſilence. Parental tenderneſs, which was rather partially beſtowed on his deſerving ſon, as he was the only male heir, made him ſhrink with horror from the dangers to which he muſt inevitably be expoſed, and which his imagination painted in their moſt terrific forms. The horrors of war ſtood foremoſt, ſupported by famine, ſickneſs, and death, its collateral adherents; then the yellow fever!—the certain deſtruction to his hopes of promiſed happineſs paſſed in review before him. He fancied his ſon, his beloved Archibald, ſtretched by its fatal power on the bed of death! No tender ſoothing cares of affection to mitigate his pain in the laſt extremities—to ſupport him in the laſt ſtruggles, as life, faſt ebbing through its channels, retreated from his heart—or to guide him through the dark and narrow gates which mortal man is deſtined to paſs, ere he can enter Eternity!—no tender hand to cloſe thoſe eyes in eternal ſleep, which fancy painted ſtarting from their ſockets, (though now they were ſparkling with animation at the hopes of having an opportunity to unſheath his ſword for the honour of his country)—nor one pitying tear ſhed by the eye of ſympathizing tenderneſs to conſecrate his tomb.

He grew faint; the anguiſh of his mind brought the drops of cold perſpiration on his forehead;—he roſe to recover himſelf; but his ſtrength deſerted him, and he tottered to his chair.

Terrified at his ſudden indiſpoſition, Emmeline ran to ſupport him, whilſt Montgomery, greatly agitated, offered him a glaſs of water, which he accepted, gratefully preſſing his hand: it ſoon revived him, and, when ſufficiently recovered, he ſaid—

"For Heaven's ſake, my dear boy, give up all thoughts of joining the Army! for if you were not abſolutely killed, yet the ſuſpenſe I ſhould be in, from the knowledge of the danger to which you would be conſtantly expoſed, would ſoon break my heart. Seeing he looked depreſſed, he ſaid, "If you muſt leave home, as you have already ſeen whatever is worth notice in England, command as much money as you pleaſe, and make the tour of Scotland."

"Oh Sir!" ſaid Montgomery, extremely affected, "compoſe your ſpirits; your ſon's actions ſhall not tend to give them ſo much uneaſineſs: and though my fondeſt wiſhes are diſappointed, your's ſhall ſupply their place, nor ſhall the leaſt murmur eſcape my lips in intimating that they are not conſonant to mine; for I muſt learn to ſubdue my inclinations, and make my only joy conſiſt in preferring and promoting the happineſs of thoſe I love, to my own."

The naturally lively are often ſooner and more eaſily affected than characters of a more ſerious turn,—for which I cannot account, unleſs it be that their ſenſe of feeling is rendered, by their lively imaginations, more refined than the grave and ſedentary; which makes it ſo delicate, that it receives the ſlighteſt impreſſion either of pain or pleaſure.

Emmeline, who had been ſilently ſhedding tears ever ſince ſhe had read the letter, quickly baniſhed the look of ſorrow for that of joy when her brother, ſo contrary to every expectation ſhe had formed, reſigned all thoughts of making the Army his profeſſion.

Sir Hugh, who was equally ſurpriſed

with unexpected pleaſure, ſhook him gratefully by the hand, ſaying—

"You are a noble fellow, my dear Archy, but ſuch as I was convinced I ſhould ever find you; and from my ſoul I thank you for this freſh proof of your dutiful affection, which, believe me, ſhould never have been ſo tried in any other caſe."

Montgomery preſſed his father's hand affectionately, and withdrew to the ſtudy diſappointed, though he could not help feeling a ſecret pleaſure from the conſciouſneſs of having acted in uniſon with his duty: when haſtily diſpatching an anſwer to Captain Macartney, ſpecifying his reaſons for declining the acceptance of his propoſition, the man was called up, who had been regaling himſelf by his orders; when, delivering his letter, he begged he would uſe the greateſt ſpeed back again, at the ſame time preſenting him with a ſmall purſe of money, to accelerate his journey. The man promiſed faithfully to return in leſs time than he came, and withdrew, with many thanks for his bounty.

The next week was ſpent in making the neceſſary preparations for travelling; an elegant plain carriage, for which he had purchaſed four beautiful bays, came down from Hatchet's, in Long-Acre, where he had beſpoke it the preceding winter. His two faithful ſervants, who were ſtrongly attached to his intereſt, received orders to prepare to attend him, and their undiſguiſed looks ſufficiently expreſſed the joy they felt at the welcome mandate. He wrote to Mr. Belmont a circumſtantial and accurate plan of his intended tour; but his letter did not convey one ſingle hope to Anna, as ſhe was not once throughout particularly mentioned.

Sir Hugh, in ſecret, wiſhed that his ſon had been contented to remain at home; but as he had already made ſo great a ſacrifice to his wiſhes, he acceded to his propoſal of ſetting out the next week for Scotland with ſeeming willingneſs, after doubling the ſum of one thouſand pounds per annum, which he formerly allowed him.

Every thing being in readineſs for the journey, he took an affectionate leave of his family; which as he has now quitted to take the direct road to Berwick, from whence he intends to proceed through Kelſo, Lauderdale, &c. to Edinburgh, I ſhall leave him to purſue knowledge and pleaſure whilſt I take a retroſpective view of the Belmont family.

In vain did Anna aſſume the appearance of cheerfulneſs after the departure of Montgomery from the Lodge; for her heart was a prey to the keeneſt anguiſh, which threatened to ſacrifice her, ere long, a lovely victim at the ſhrine of unrequited Love; whilſt Sorrow ſeemed to anticipate her intentions, by the willingneſs ſhe diſplayed to conduct her beauteous but depreſſed form to the humble lowly bed of eternal repoſe. The attentions of the family were entirely engroſſed in endeavouring to divert her reflections from Montgomery, by converſation and amuſements;—he was carefully avoided being made the ſubject of their diſcourſe; but, in ſpite of their exertions, ſhe daily grew worſe.

Recourſe was at length had to a phyſician; who, without being made acquainted with the nature of her diſorder, after tracing each various ſymptom of her complaint to its primeval ſource, and cloſely purſuing its retroceding courſe through the channels of hope, fear, grief, deſpondency, &c. informed Lady Belmont that love alone was the cauſe of her daughter's illneſs, adviſing her by all means to ſteal her affections, if poſſible, from the object beloved, (as he feared it was a hopeleſs paſſion), by introducing her into ſtrange company, and keeping her ideas conſtantly engaged by change of ſcenes, and perpetual amuſements; concluding by recommending an excurſion to Brighton.

His advice was immediately adopted, and this amiable family ſet out for that place after taking leave of Percival, who was again left in comparative ſolitude; though it muſt be confeſſed in a much more enviable ſtate than before, as the refuſe of ſlighted love was then his only potion; whereas, at preſent, he imbibed the pure unadulterated ſprings of reciprocal affection, the correſpondence with Caroline Mortimer being kept up with the greateſt regularity and affection on both ſides.

Anna's time was now ſo conſtantly employed, that ſhe could not at all indulge her inclinations by reflecting on Montgomery in ſolitude, unleſs it was in thoſe hours dedicated by cuſtom and nature to repoſe; as Lady Belmont abſolutely compelled her to accompany her wherever ſhe went. Their own lodgings were conſtantly enlivened by ſociety, and every place where company was to be met with, they frequented; but the libraries were in general reſorted to in the morning, for there Anna could ſometimes glean amuſement from the harveſt of novelty.

There was one morning an elegant locket to be raffled for, to which Anna was the firſt ſubſcriber; and, accompanied by Lady Belmont, and her brother, ſhe went to the library; Sir Charles promiſing to meet them as ſoon as he had written a letter to his ſteward.

The company that were already aſſembled, had formed into promiſcuous parties, waiting the arrival of the others; but Anna's eyes were immediately attracted by a lady ſhe had never ſeen before, who ſat directly oppoſite the entrance at the farther end of the library. Her countenance portrayed the moſt ſprightly traits of good-humour: ſhe appeared to be about forty, and was converſing with a gentleman, who ſat careleſſly reclined on his chair, with one arm thrown acroſs the back of her's, and who, from the great reſemblance of his features (though he might be two or three years younger) appeared to be her brother. Anna had partly turned round to point them out to her brother, when the lady looking at her, and tapping the gentleman with her fan, ſaid, loud enough to be heard—

"Do, my Lord, for once diſplay the extent of your diſcriminating powers, and tell me, if poſſible, who that lovely repreſentative of ſenſibility is."

"Upon my word I cannot, my Lady," replied the gentleman, looking with admiration on Anna, "for I never yet knew a mortal who was perſonally acquainted with Divinities; but, from her incomparable beauty, and graceful majeſtic mien, I ſhould take her for the Queen of Love, conducted by Wit, in the character of the gentleman; and Learning, in that other elegant female form."

"You are egregiouſly miſtaken, Lord Weſtbury!" ſaid a young conceited coxcomb, walking up to him, bruſhing a grain of powder off his ſleeve with a fine cambric handkerchief which he held in his hand; "for I have juſt been informed that ſhe is a loveſick Paſtorella, entirely ignorant of the world and mankind."

"I am ſorry, Sir, that falſehood and ſcandal ſhould prevail," replied the lady, with cool indifference.

Mr. Belmont perceived the fop's vanity was hurt, but determined it ſhould meet with double mortification for his inſolence; he looked at him with an air of contempt.

A general laugh now prevailed, at the expence of this inſignificant ſprig of faſhion; who, by his precipitate retreat, ſeemed happy to eſcape the juſt reſentment of the enraged guardian and protector of his accompliſhed ſiſter.

Lord Weſtbury then approached Mr. Belmont, and, politely bowing, expreſſed a wiſh to be acquainted with the gentleman who could, by a look, vindicate the character of a young lady, who he preſumed was his ſiſter.

"But will it be thought too encroaching," added his Lordſhip, "if I beg the favour of being introduced to your elegant companions, as Lord Weſtbury?"

"By no means," replied Belmont; "a title, amongſt the fair, has innumerable charms."

"Do not believe that," ſaid Lord Weſtbury, "for mine has not yet had power ſufficient to enchant a ſingle heart."

"It may, nevertheleſs, my Lord," replied Mr. Belmont: "ſo, without miſtruſt, repoſe your confidence on the boſom of Futurity; and, believe me, you will not be diſappointed."

He then conducted him to the oppoſite counter, where his mother and ſiſter were viewing ſome different articles, and politely introduced him as "a ſingle, unconnected being, who, wiſhing for acquaintance, begged to be received into their ſociety in the character of the Earl of Weſtbury."

After converſing a ſhort time on immaterial ſubjects, he introduced his ſiſter, Lady Gertrude de Montfort; when, the company being aſſembled, Anna was called upon to rattle the dice. Lord Weſtbury attended her to the counter, when, throwing fifty-one in three throws, he ſaid—

"My dear Madam, you ſeem determined to be an object of envy; for, not content with the conſtant ſacrifice of hearts which are offered to you by the one ſex, you ſeem bent on depriving the other of thoſe ornaments, which, though they may add to their beauty, can only leſſen your's."

"You are very gallant, my Lord; but they are both ſuch unneceſſary articles for the increaſe of my felicity," replied Anna, "that I ſhould be very ſorry to excite vexation at my ſuppoſed happineſs, by depriving the gentlemen of their affections, or the ladies of their brilliants."

They then returned to their party, when Mr. Belmont introduced his Lordſhip to Sir Charles, who had joined them. Mutual aſtoniſhment was portrayed in each of their countenances when Sir Charles ſaid—

"If I am not very much miſtaken, my Lord, I think I may claim the honour of a prior acquaintance with you?"

"Lord Orford has ſaid," replied Lord Weſtbury, "that, of all the virtues, gratitude has the ſhorteſt memory: nevertheleſs I think I can prove the affirmation erroneous, as I have the advantage of Sir Charles in recollecting, that it was to the friendly aſſiſtance which he and a Mr. Edwin afforded myſelf and another gentleman, that we were enabled to purſue our journey to Weſtbury Park after having been overturned in our carriage a few miles on this ſide of Wenlock, in Shropſhire."

Shaking hands, Sir Charles congratulated him on the unexpected meeting, and expreſſed the ſatisfaction he derived from having been of ſome trifling ſervice to them; giving him and his ſiſter, Lady Gertrude de Montfort, an invitation to dinner the ſame day, *ſans ceremonie*, as he wiſhed to augment his preſent pleaſure by a more intimate acquaintance.

Lady Gertrude accepted it with pleaſure, as ſhe was delighted with the elegant manners of Lady Belmont and Anna; for, inſtead of finding the ſimple Paſtorella the fop had deſcribed, ſhe was equally aſtoniſhed and gratified at having formed an acquaintance with a beautiful young female, who had ſenſe enough to be exempt from vanity, and whom ſhe found more refined in her converſation than any young lady in the circle of her female friends.

By the chance of the dice Anna became poſſeſſed of the locket; and whilſt ſhe is receiving the congratulations of the company, I ſhall ſketch the outlines of Lady Gertrude de Montfort's character.

She was the maiden ſiſter, and only relative of the Earl of Weſtbury; who highly eſteemed her, becauſe ſhe preſerved her good-nature, although an old maid! Like one amiable lady, whoſe name I am not at liberty to mention, ſhe had the courage to appear in a different character from the reſt of her ſiſterhood: for ſlander in her could not make a friend to ſpread the falſe reports of defamation. What is ſtill more aſtoniſhing, ſhe never envied the felicity of ſprightly youth; but, on the contrary, was never pleaſed unleſs ſhe could promote their happineſs! If Virtue was led aſtray, and expreſſed a wiſh to return, inſtead of meeting with bitter invectives and cruel remarks from Lady Gertrude, ſhe was received with the pitying ſmile of charity, and warmly encouraged to purſue the journey of life through the undeviating paths of moral rectitude. A ſincere friend to youth, youth was her warmeſt friend; and by the aged ſhe was equally reſpected. Benevolence was eloquent, calumny dumb in her preſence; and vice fled from her as its moſt inveterate enemy.

CHAP. II.

LORD WESTBURY and his ſiſter cultivated the acquaintance of Sir Charles and his family with the moſt polite attention. Anna admired them, and found a degree of eaſe in their enlivening ſociety, which would ſometimes create a ſmile of apparent cheerfulneſs on her features; but it was the ſuperficial ſemblance of peace, ſince her heart was not touched with its power;—the bloom of health was not renewed by change of air, neither did the languid depreſſion of her ſpirits experience any permanent alteration from company or amuſements.

The heart of philanthropy is ſuſceptible of the pureſt delight at the knowledge of the unexpected happineſs of others; and Anna's was ſenſible of a tranſient but ſincere ſatisfaction, when her brother received a letter a letter from Percival, dated from Montgomery, in Wales, ſtating that he was then at Mr. Mortimer's, and happy in the full completion of his wiſhes, having received the hand and heart of the amiable Caroline, at the altar of Hymen; from which period he firmly believed he ſhould ever have reaſon to date the commencement of his happineſs.

To account for this ſudden change in his ſituation, he related the circumſtance of the poſt-coach being overturned, (mentioned in the former volume), and of the trifling aſſiſtance he rendered one of the gentlemen, which happening two or three years ago, time had eraſed it from his memory till the following letter, which he had tranſcribed, recalled it, accompanied with the moſt grateful ſentiments.

TO MR. EDWIN.

" DEAR SIR,

" As I was travelling to Weſtbury Park a few years ago, an accident, which might have been fatal, had it not been for the humane aſſiſtance of a young Divine, laid me under an eternal obligation; which, though I have not before had an opportunity, it has ever been my conſtant and ſincere wiſh to repay.

"By the deceaſe of the late incumbent, the preſentation of the living of Weſtbury, in Shropſhire, has reverted to me, which is at leaſt worth three hundred per annum. For your reception, Sir, I have ordered it to be immediately prepared; but, inſtead of cancelling the debt of gratitude, I find that your acceptance of it will only enhance the obligation of,

"Dear Sir,

"Your moſt obedient, humble ſervant,

"WESTBURY."

"*Brighthelmſtone, July* 10."

Percival then concluded his letter to Mr. Belmont, by ſaying a clergyman had already

ready ſucceeded him in the Curacy of Belmont, and that the next week was appointed for taking leave of Mr. Mortimer, when he and Mrs. Edwin were to ſet off for Weſtbury, which was at no very conſiderable diſtance from Montgomery.

The Belmont family, who highly eſteemed the worthy and deſerving Percival, whoſe pure virtues rendered him an honour to his profeſſion, ſincerely rejoiced in his good fortune at being inducted to the living; whilſt the elegant manner in which it was preſented, tended greatly to enhance their good opinion of the noble Earl.

Anna had now become perfectly reconciled to the diſſipated way of living, compared to the regularity in which her time was ſpent at Belmont; and, could ſhe have obliterated the idea of Montgomery from her heart, ſhe might have been happy: but, though ſhe had promiſed Lady Belmont to endeavour to forget him, ſhe found it was impoſſible.

There was one circumſtance which tended to give her uneaſineſs, and that was the pointed attention of the Earl of Weſtbury; which, ſhe was ſorry to perceive, was rather encouraged than diſapproved of by her parents. In truth, Lady Belmont did flatter herſelf that he might in time wean her daughter's affections from Montgomery by his polite and conſtant attention to her; and as her only wiſh was to ſee her amiable Anna reſtored to health and happineſs, ſhe rather promoted than diſcouraged it: whilſt the good but unſuſpecting Sir Charles, who had not yet conceived the moſt remote idea of her love for Montgomery, encouraged him from different motives; for he wiſhed to ſee his Anna adorn that ſtation of life which parental fondneſs convinced him her virtues and accompliſhments had deſtined her to fill; and as the character of the Earl of Weſtbury was unexceptionable, his morals irreproachable, he wiſhed to ſee him conduct her to the noble ſphere of grandeur where her virtues, neceſſarily becoming more conſpicuouſly eminent, would meet with that admiration, which the more retired walks of life prevented them from receiving.

She had been paid very particular attention to before by Percival and Captain Macartney; but by a well-timed, cool, and polite reſerve, ſhe had turned the drift of their inclinations into a better channel:—ſhe therefore endeavoured to make the Earl deſiſt by the moſt pointed marks of indifference; but he wilfully overlooked them, and by paying the moſt minute attention to her looks, perſevered in preventing her every wiſh by anticipation.

Unable, by a very ſevere cold ſhe had caught, to accompany Sir Charles, Lady Belmont, and her brother, who, invited by the beauty of the morning, had mounted their horſes to take a long ride, ſhe drew the table near her, and taking out her netting, employed her hands, whilſt her thoughts ſought amuſement by wandering to Scotland.

By indulging her reflections for one half hour, without interruption, ſhe experienced more ſatisfaction than ſhe had done for ſome time paſt; and had even begun to indulge a wiſh that the fineneſs of the morning might tempt the family to extend their ride beyond the diſtance they had agreed upon; when the door was unexpectedly thrown open, and the Earl of Weſtbury announced.

Had ſhe given herſelf time to reflect on the poſſibility of this occurrence, ſhe would not have been ſurpriſed; as ſcarcely a morning paſſed without his paying them a viſit, ſometimes with, but more frequently without Lady Gertrude;—but as love had entirely engroſſed her thoughts, ſhe had never dreamt of the probability of an intruſion; which made her, when riſing from her ſeat, repay his elegant compliments with a ſmall degree of confuſion; which was not leſſened by his taking a chair, and enquiring after the reſt of the family.

The converſation was kept up for ſome time on indifferent topics, till, as ſhe was going to addreſs him, ſhe accidentally, or rather naturally, looked up at him; but perceiving his eyes were intently fixed upon her with an expreſſion of admiration, ſhe inſtantly caſt her's down; when a ſilence of ſome minutes enſued, which was at length broken by the Earl's addreſſing Anna, ſaying, with a confuſed, but reſpectful accent, as he looked in her face—

"Theſe moments offer themſelves ſo opportunely, Miſs Belmont, to the diſcloſure of a ſecret which I have long wiſhed to reveal, if my actions, my eyes, have not already betrayed it, that I muſt implore your conſent to liſten patiently to the recital; when a ſingle word from you will either doom me to miſery, or ineffable delight."

"Then pray, my Lord," ſaid Anna, deeply bluſhing, "do not diſcloſe it, as it inveſts me with a power which I muſt confeſs I am very unwilling to accept: for though it is not poſſible always to coincide with another's ideas of happineſs, I ſhould feel great reluctance in ſentencing a fellow-creature to miſery."

"I fear your ſpeech is a fatal preſage to the deſtruction of my hopes," ſaid Lord Weſtbury, ſomewhat dejected; "yet, nevertheleſs, I muſt confide in you with the ſacred depoſit of affection, as the ſeaſon is far advanced; and Lady Gertrude wiſhing me to accompany her to London, I may not have another opportunity.

"You muſt be ſenſible, Miſs Belmont, unleſs wilfully blind to your own merits, that your virtues, your accompliſhments, and pardon me if I ſay your beauty, can never fail to inſpire the moſt tender ſentiments in the boſom that is warmed by the ſmalleſt ſpark of ſenſibility:—need I ſay, that your firſt appearance inſpired a ſentiment in mine, which a cloſer intimacy with perfection has ripened into the moſt ardent and affectionate paſſion? Then, Oh Miſs Belmont!" added he, reſpectfully preſſing her hand to his lips, "deign to make me the happieſt, the moſt envied of mortals, by accepting my hand and fortune on your own terms; and the ſtudy of my life ſhall be to repay the vaſt, the infinite obligation!"

"Indeed, my Lord," ſaid Anna, with modeſt reſerve withdrawing her hand, "you eſtimate my humble merits at too high a price. Senſible of your worth, believe me I am grateful for your good opinion, and ſhall ever be proud to deſerve it whilſt you retain the character of Sir Charles's friend;—but you muſt reſerve your affections for a female more deſerving of them; who, bleſſed with more diſcernment, will ſet a juſter value on your intrinſic merit, nor think the price too high at the ſum of reciprocal affection. I will not follow the example of my ſex by raiſing your expectations on a groundleſs hope; for, upon my honour, my Lord, you may rely upon my ſincerity, when I affirm that eſteem is the only equivalent I can offer you."

"For Heaven's ſake," ſaid his Lordſhip paſſionately, "retract that harſh, that cruel ſentence! Drive me not to deſpair by a ſolemn aſſeveration that you can afford no hope to make even exiſtence ſupportable, but generouſly accept my fortune, and let me drag out a miſerable being—a ſervile dependant on your bounty, ſo as you will but ſometimes deign to gild the dreary gloom with one favouring ſmile, which fancy may feed upon till you again return to diffuſe, by your preſence, a tranſient gleam of happineſs."

"Indeed, my Lord," ſaid Anna, gravely, "you muſt preſerve your reaſon, or you will compel me to leave you; for my preſent weak ſtate of health is eaſily injured. I thank you gratefully for your unbounded, generous offers, but again declare that I cannot accept them: as I ſolemnly aſſure you, that any other ſentiment than eſteem I have it not in my power to grant; but that eſteem I freely offer you, in the moſt indefinite acceptation of the word."

"Oh Miſs Belmont!" replied his Lordſhip, riſing, and pacing the room in great agitation, "eſteem is too weak a medicine to effect a cure for a paſſion ſo honourable and fervent as that which glows within my breaſt. Here, on my knees," added he, gracefully falling on one knee, and taking her hand, "let me entreat you to revoke your cruel ſentence, and implore you to make me happy, by inveſting me with the power to claim this dear hand at the altar!"

"My Lord, you are importunate!" ſaid Anna, majeſtically riſing, and endeavouring to diſengage her hand. "I will never beſtow my hand in marriage, unleſs my heart will offer it a free gift; and you muſt excuſe me if I think your profeſſions of love are very ſelf-intereſted, ſince you are willing to make me ſacrifice my happineſs for the gratification of your's!"

"Oh Miſs Belmont!" ſaid Lord Weſtbury, greatly affected, ſtill retaining her hand, "reproach I can even bear from you; though humanity might have prevented you from inflicting ſo deep a wound, to increaſe the pangs of my preſent feelings. For can you deem it a ſacrifice of your happineſs, when my whole attention ſhould have been engaged in tenderly anticipating every wiſh before your inclination had ſcarcely formed it; in ſtrewing your paths with flowers delightful to every ſenſe, and promoting your eaſe and comfort with the moſt delicate and unchangeable affection?"

"Excuſe me, my Lord," replied Anna, ſcarcely able to conceal her own emotions, excited by his generoſity; "I muſt retire to dreſs for dinner; but, believe me, my ſentiments are unaltera—"

Here ſhe was interrupted by the entrance of Lady Gertrude de Montfort, who, ſeeing them ſo engaged, offered to retire; but Anna, deeply bluſhing, begged her to advance, when the Earl, riſing from his ſupplicating poſture, took his ſiſter's hand, and conducting her to Anna, begged ſhe would plead his paſſion with all the rhetoric ſhe was miſtreſs of, to that inflexible Divinity," bowing to Anna, when he withdrew, in no very enviable ſituation.

An hour elapſed, in which time Lady Gertrude pleaded his caſe with ſuch pathetic energy, that Anna, in tears, at length entreated her to deſiſt, unleſs ſhe wiſhed to ſee her miſerable; which, much as ſhe eſteemed her brother, ſhe aſſured her muſt inevitably be the caſe if compelled to reſign her hand, unſupported by affection, or againſt her inclination.—Convinced that ſhe would never willingly comply, Lady Gertrude promiſed to make her brother ſenſible of his error in encouraging a paſſion which ſhe could never return; and of the cruelty he would be guilty of, if he perſiſted in diſtreſſing her with any farther declaration of it: when tenderly bidding Anna adieu, ſhe departed, leaving her at liberty to retire to dreſs; which ſhe did with a heavy and agitated heart, oppreſſed by tne circumſtances of the morning.

The Earl of Weſtbury, after this converſation, carefully forbore mentioning a ſyllable of his paſſion; though whenever he was in Anna's company, his looks and actions ſufficiently expreſſed the tender intereſt he took in every thing which concerned her. She endeavoured to ſhun his ſociety as often as ſhe could, conſiſtent with the rules of common politeneſs;—yet he was not to be intimidated by indifference; for, with the moſt polite and tender aſſiduity, he ſtrove to kindle a reciprocity of affection in that heart, which, wholly engaged by the moſt ſincere love for Montgomery, conſtantly repelled the intruſion of any other encroaching ſentiment.

Her health rather declining than amending, and moſt of the company having quitted Brighthelmſtone, Lady Belmont wrote an accurate ſtatement of her caſe to the phyſician at Bridgenorth, who had before preſcribed for her; and received an order to proceed, without loſs of time, to Bath. Anna begged to return to the Lodge; but, fearful of any fatal conſequences, Lady Belmont could not accede to her requeſt; as ſhe not only wiſhed to try what effect change of ſcenes and air would again produce, but alſo hoped its famous medicinal waters would renovate her fading conſtitution.

Compelled to travel, ſhe made the neceſſary preparations for the journey, from Suſſex to Somerſetſhire, with reluctance; as a conſtant laſſitude and depreſſion of ſpirits made her wiſh to enjoy the calm tranquillity of peaceful Belmont. But as I have already carried my reader's ideas through an immeaſurable ſpace, I will eaſe them at preſent from following the Belmont family, by ſetting them down in the Creſcent, at Bath, where they fortunately procured very genteel apartments.

The next morning, attired in a ſimple muſlin dreſs, leaning on the arm of Sir Charles, and attended by Lady Belmont and her brother, ſhe entered the pump-room. The majeſtic but ſoft elegance of her mien, and the calm ſerene ſorrow which ſat on her beautiful but pallid features, rendered her ſo lovely and intereſting a figure, that the whiſper of admiring curioſity was immediately circulated through the room; which attracting the attention of ſome faſhionables who were engaged in converſation at the farther end of it, a perfect ſilence enſued till they were ſeated, as if the impoſed reſpectful tribute due to ſuperior merit. The book of the Bath arrivals was then referred to; but it afforded no ſatisfaction, as their names were not yet inſerted.

Anna's attention was ſoon attracted by the appearance of Mr. Douglas on the oppoſite ſide of the room, in cloſe converſation with an elderly gentleman and a young lady, whoſe pleaſing, lively, animated features received not the leaſt impreſſion of ſaddened ſorrow from the black crape dreſs in which ſhe was attired. Anna pointed him out to her brother, who immediately croſſed over, and accoſted Mr. Douglas; who, from having been the only one in the room who had not ſeen them enter, expreſſed the utmoſt aſtoniſhment, as Mr. Belmont, ſhaking him by the hand, ſaid—

" This unexpected meeting makes me ſincerely grateful to whatever power tranſported you hither. Pray tell me what knight-errantry, what Quixotte expedition, has occaſioned your appearance in this place; for I fancied you were ſtill in the metropolis, exploring the ſecret haunts of Merit in rags, and Virtue in diſtreſs, to guide them with Benevolence to the realms of joy."

Mr. Douglas ſoon ſatisfied him in every particular; enquiring after his family very politely, and not forgetting the lovely Anna.

On hearing the name of Belmont mentioned, the gentleman, who had before been converſing with Mr. Douglas, haſtily roſe from his ſeat, and, with pleaſure in his eyes, ſhook him heartily by the hand, ſaying—

"You are then the friend of my poor Archy, Sir?—the man whom Sir Hugh Montgomery has long wiſhed to be acquainted with. We will cultivate our acquaintance over a bottle of the beſt wine the city can produce."

"You do me infinite honour, Sir Hugh," ſaid Mr. Belmont, bowing; "but I hope my friend Archibald has not compelled you to wear that melancholy emblem of mortality?"

Sir Hugh informed him it was for Lady Montgomery; though he had been very much afraid he ſhould have been obliged to wear it for his ſon, as he had lately been very ill of a malignant fever at Kilkardy."

Whilſt Sir Hugh was introducing Mr. Belmont to his daughter Emmeline, (whom my readers have no doubt concluded to be the young lady that engaged the notice of Anna), Mr. Douglas perceived Sir Charles, and croſſed the room to pay his compliments to the family; which Emmeline obſerving, and ſtruck, with the incomparable beauty of Anna, addreſſed Mr. Belmont on the ſubject; who replied—

"Surrounded as I am by beauty, I find it amounts to an abſolute impoſſibility, Miſs Montgomery, to ſingle out any particular object who alone can lay claims to the appellation of Angel."

"Good heavens!" ſaid Emmeline, with a look of aſtoniſhment, "not able to diſtinguiſh an aerial being from a mortal!"

"It is impoſſible," interrupted Mr. Belmont, ſmiling, "if they are all like Miſs Montgomery."

"Pſhaw, you flatterer!" ſaid Emmeline, "reſerve your compliments for thoſe who have more pretenſions to them; and tell me, if you can, who that elegant model of penſive, intereſting beauty is, in converſation with Mr. Douglas?"

"My ſiſter," replied Mr. Belmont, pleaſed with the univerſal admiration ſhe excited.

Emmeline no longer wondered that Montgomery had ſaid ſo much in her praiſe; though ſhe could not help reflecting with aſtoniſhment on his leaving her ſociety with ſuch cool indifference, to engage in the buſtle of war, as he had intended doing.

Whilſt theſe ideas were paſſing in quick ſucceſſion acroſs her imagination, Sir Hugh begged Mr. Belmont to introduce him to his family, which he very readily complied with. At the ſound of the well-known name of Montgomery, Anna's heart beat in reſponſive meaſures of delight, as that welcome ſound had long been a ſtranger to her ear,; but the tranſitory pleaſure which his name produced, was quickly diſplaced by the intruding recollection that they might, perhaps, be in mourning for the cauſe of all her anxious diſquietude. Theſe fears were, however, ſoon diſpelled by Lady Belmont kindly enquiring his health, when a ſatisfactory anſwer from Emmeline kindled the dying embers of happineſs in her boſom that deſpondency had nearly extinguiſhed, which emitting an emanation of preſent, but ſhort-lived, ſatisfaction, her eye, which had long been dimmed with ſorrow, attracted the ray of comfort, and ſparkled with the reflection. She was going to addreſs Emmeline; but perceiving an elegant young man, who had watched her ſince her firſt entrance with the moſt ſcrutinizing attention, take out his pencil and paper, ſhe deſiſted.

Sir Hugh, pleaſed with the affability of Sir Charles and Lady Belmont, and the lively vivacity of their ſon, readily complied with Sir Charles's requeſt to return with them to dinner. As they were leaving the room, Mr. Belmont and Mr. Douglas, who was alſo invited to ſpend the day with them *en famille*, offered to attend Emmeline and

Anna, who were behind their parents; but Emmeline offering her arm to Anna, and rejecting Mr. Douglas's, ſaid, with a ſmile—

"I poſitively will not proceed a ſingle ſtep, unleſs you agree to go before us."

Juſt as they had left the room, the gentleman, whoſe attention had been ſo engaged by Anna, ſlipped a paper into her hand, and immediately entered it. She was going to throw it down, unopened; but Emmeline perceiving her intention, caught it, ſaying, with her permiſſion, ſhe would put it in her pocket, as it might afford them ſome diverſion when they were alone, not doubting but that it was a *billet-doux*.

On entering their lodgings, her impatient curioſity to ſee its contents would not ſuffer her to take a chair; but, winking to Anna to withdraw, ſhe gladly followed her to her dreſſing-room, when, faſtening the door, ſhe flung herſelf into a chair, exclaiming—

"Oh my dear Miſs Belmont! I am ſo happy in having ſo fortunately effected an eſcape from thoſe noiſy mortals in the regions below, that poſitively nothing but this magic paper (taking it out of her pocket, and laying it on the table before her) could have increaſed my felicity; and to make the ſum complete, I have been tortured on the rack of impatience till I could find this opportunity of ſeeing its contents."

"I can eaſily perceive," ſaid Anna, ſmiling as ſhe took the oppoſite chair, "that you are not endowed with any uncommon degree of patience."

"Patience! No, on my honour!—You might as well preach it to the winds, for it would have the ſame influence. But come, will you authorize me to read this

"Fond, this tender billet-doux?"

"It intereſts you as much as it does me," replied Anna, ſmiling, "for I aſſure you I am wholly unacquainted with the author."

"Indeed!" ſaid Emmeline, with a look of ſurpriſe as ſhe unfolded the paper, "then I may begin without heſitation."

Which ſhe did as follows:—

"Why, when Montgomery's health was —

"Good Heavens!" interrupted Anna, with trembling earneſtneſs, "that paper could never have been deſigned for me?"

"You ſaid it equally intereſted us both!" replied Emmeline, looking archly at her, "but, if I may judge from its appearance, you are the only perſon for whom it *could* be intended. Nevertheleſs I muſt entreat you to let me proceed without interruption, for it ſeems very intereſting."

Whilſt Anna was anxiouſly, but fearfully waiting the concluſion, ſhe began very emphatically:—

"Why, when Montgomery's health was aſcertain'd,
"Did your ſoft eyes with animation glow?
"Has love malign an angel's peace reſtrain'd,
"Is love the ſource from whence your ſorrows flow?

"Unpractis'd in diſſimulation's wiles,
"Your eyes reſolv'd the ſecret of your heart;
"Whilſt Love's inſpiring, emblematic ſmiles,
"Reveal'd the truth thoſe eyes diſclos'd in part.

" I pity'd the deſtruction he had made,
" And, unſuſpecting, view'd the beauteous ſpoils;
" Indulg'd a wiſh an angel's peace t'have ſav'd,
" But was myſelf entangl'd in the toils.

" But reſt aſſur'd what your ſoft eyes betray'd,
" No farther than my heart ſhall ever ſtray:
" Then farewel, Purity's celeſtial maid!
" May Peace and Pleaſure greet you on your way!

" Whilſt I, exil'd from happineſs and you,
" To diſtant climes in ſearch of pleaſure roam;
" My native country bid a long adieu,
" To ſeek that peace diſcord denies at home.

" But ſtill for Virtue's purer ſelf, my prayers
" In daily off'rings, ſhall be ſent to heav'n,
" T'implore its aid to eaſe you of your cares,
" And grant that happineſs to you be giv'n."

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" Pſhaw!" ſaid Emmeline, throwing it on the table, and looking at Anna with a pretended air of indifference, " 'tis the compoſition of inſanity. For what, in the name of myſtery, could he mean, by ſuppoſing that your eyes received animation from the knowledge of Archibald's health?"

"Indeed," ſaid Anna, greatly confuſed, "I—I cannot tell."

"But I can, my dear Miſs Belmont!" ſaid Emmeline, preſſing her hand. "But unleſs I go down ſtairs, Sir Hugh will be raiſing the houſe with a hue and cry after his Emmy."

Saying which, ſhe tripped down ſtairs, leaving Anna to conjecture her meaning.

After ſhe was gone, Anna took up the verſes, and carefully folding them up, placed them in her pocket-book; puzzling her imagination in endeavouring to find out who the author could be: but convinced at length ſhe had never before ſeen him, ſhe deſcended to the parlour, and the day, beguiled by happineſs, appeared very ſhort even to her; for in the company of Montgomery's father and ſiſter ſhe experienced a cheerful ſatisfaction to which ſhe had long been a ſtranger.

CHAP. III.

AFTER the firſt introduction, Emmeline was never happy but when in the ſociety of Anna; who, equally pleaſed with her company, becauſe ſhe was the ſiſter of the loved Montgomery, whom ſhe could often fancy preſent by tracing his reſemblance in her features, would never go into public unaccompanied by her. Lady Belmont admired her as a lively girl, and warmly encouraged her viſits; for ſince Anna had firſt become acquainted with her, ſhe had aſſumed a greater degree of cheerfulneſs, and appeared happier in ſociety, which reanimated the fading hopes of her parents, and gave them indeſcribable pleaſure, as ſhe had long been the cauſe of their ſecret anxiety.

Sir Hugh, whoſe heart had likewiſe been prepared by his ſon for receiving the ſlighteſt impreſſion in favour of the Belmont family, was ſo delighted in their ſociety, that he was conſtantly forming parties of pleaſure for the next day's amuſement. His oddities made him a great favourite of Mr. Belmont's, in whoſe enlivening company he regained that pleaſant good humour, which till he had married the late Lady Montgomery, had ever been the diſtinguiſhing mark that determined his character. Anna reſpected him; and, by indulging his little caprices, and humoring his wiſhes, ſo entirely won his affections, that he would frequently declare he wanted nothing to render his happineſs complete but the privilege of calling her his daughter. Theſe declarations, though they never failed to ſuffuſe her face with crimſon bluſhes, nevertheleſs afforded her the moſt heartfelt ſatisfaction; for to be beloved by the father of Montgomery was, to her, the ſecond degree only of ſuperlative happineſs.

Her cheek, like the opening roſe of the

earlieſt Spring, began again to diſcloſe the beautiful delicate tints of returning health; her family imputed the re-eſtabliſhment of it to the efficacious powers of the Bath waters, which ſhe had conſtantly taken; though, ſince the firſt morning, neither ſhe nor Emmeline had ſeen the gentleman who preſented her with the verſes. But I am more apt to aſcribe it to her friendſhip with Emmeline, who, though a lively girl, was not only capable of the warmeſt, but moſt ſincere and laſting attachment; and whoſe frank engaging manners ſoon won her entire confidence. For, as liquor in a ſtate of fermentation, if cloſe confined within a caſk, will frequently burſt it, but exempts it from danger when once it has found a place to vent itſelf; ſo was Anna, freed from a conſiderable degree of uneaſineſs which had long threatened to deprive her of exiſtence, by having obtained the liberty of converſing freely of Montgomery, and expatiating on his many virtues, without reſtraint; Emmeline having previouſly engaged, with the moſt ſacred promiſes, to preſerve the truſt inviolate.

Each riſing ſun increaſed her renovating ſtrength, and unfolded the bloſſom of health, which again flouriſhed on her lovely face in the pride of conſcious beauty, whilſt her lips received the crimſon of vermilion. Though reflection was never abſent from Montgomery, yet in frequenting the circles of elegant ſociety, and purſuing diverſions with moderation, ſhe ſeldom failed to find innocent pleaſure;—but in converſing with his deareſt relatives, her chief delight conſiſted; for when in their company, time never loitered on heavy pinions, but flew on the wings of happineſs.

Bath being now deſerted by the ſick, the grave, and the gay, who, like birds of paſſage, flock together to take wing for another climate, the Belmont family accepted the invitation of Sir Hugh and Emmeline, and attended them to Montgomery Hall.

Emmeline, after having conducted Anna through the different apartments in this ſpacious manſion, opened one, which ſhe told her was Montgomery's, and had not been entered ſince he had left it. There was not a ſingle piece of furniture which ſhe did not conſider as ineſtimable. The bed was a dark green ſilk damaſk, trimmed with a deep fringe; but the cornice at the foot of it moſt attracted her admiration. It conſiſted of two beautiful ſilver cherubs, ſupporting a ſcroll, on which was engraved,

"Accept, great God! this offering of praiſe,
"And grant with peace to crown my latter days!"

The offering of praiſe was a ſilver vaſe, which their hands, gracefully linked together, were ſupporting; on which was likewiſe inſcribed, "The incenſe of gratitude and thankſgiving." Struck with the novelty and appropriate beauty of the device, ſhe aſked Emmeline who had deſigned it.

"The amiable Archibald!" replied Emmeline, ſmiling; "ſo if you ever intend to ſtudy the inclinations of gravity, you muſt accurately obſerve the manner in which this room is furniſhed, as it was fitted up entirely by his own orders and expence. But, all-perfect as he is in the eyes of *one* individual," added ſhe, looking archly at Anna, "you may be convinced that he is not wholly exempt from the failing of the ſex; for, that he might have a convenient opportunity for admiring his own dear perſon, he placed this large pier glaſs directly oppoſite his bed."

"I could not think," ſaid Anna, rather gravely, "that Mr. Montgomery made his perſon his chief ſtudy."

"I vow it is a pity," ſaid Emmeline, with a ſmile, "my brother is ſo inſenſible of his happineſs; for though he is not here to act *in ſe defendendo*, you defend him ſo warmly from the aſſaults of ſatire, that he ſtands in need of no other champion. Yet I muſt do him the juſtice to confeſs, that he is endowed with as ſmall a ſhare of vanity, as ſelf-love ever allotted to human nature."

"What then is his principal ſtudy?" aſked Anna.

"Human nature, in the beſt ſociety;" ſaid Emmeline, ſliding back a pannel in the wainſcot, which diſcloſed a cloſet, elegantly fitted up in the ſtyle of a bookcaſe, and filled with the beſt ſelection of authors. "You will there find," ſhe continued, ſmiling, "books treating of every ſubject moſt worthy the attention of the learned; in ſhort, I cannot enumerate half of his abſtracted ſtudies: and I often indulged a wiſh when he was at home, that the Greek and Latin authors had been tranſmitted to the flames, as they deprived us of ſo much of his company."

"Very kind!" ſaid Anna, who could not refrain from ſmiling at the lively manner in which ſhe exerciſed her voluble powers; "but as I may give you occaſion to indulge the ſame tender wiſh, puniſh theſe elegant monopolizers of your company whilſt you have it in your power, by confining them within the circumſcribed boundaries of their ſolitary, but beautiful priſon."

They then deſcended to the parlour, where Mr. Belmont and his mother were waiting to accompany them to the worthy Mr. Mortimer's, whilſt Sir Charles took a ride over the eſtate in company with Sir Hugh.

They found this good old man, this diſciple of truth and integrity, ſitting in an elbow chair, by the ſide of a comfortable fire, in his neat little parlour; the furniture of which was the hieroglyphical character of his own mind, good and ſubſtantial, but plain, ſimple, and unadorned with any ſuperfluous ornaments. He was reading the Hiſtory of Mecklenburgh to Euphraſia, who ſat on the oppoſite ſide, employed in working a beautiful piece of embroidery, which ſhe deſigned as a preſent. The becoming and polite eaſe with which ſhe received them, plainly evinced her knowledge of the world, and aſtoniſhed Mr. Belmont, who did not expect to meet with ſo much grace and elegance in that humble retirement; whilſt the bluſh of innate modeſty, (by which I would not have my readers ſuppoſe I mean an awkward baſhfulneſs) glowed on her cheeks, proclaiming that faſhionable aſſurance had not deprived her of the female's moſt beautiful attribute. I have before obſerved that her figure was tall and elegant, though her features, ſtrictly ſpeaking, could not be termed beautiful; but the pleaſing manner in which they found her employed,—her ſimple attirement, which conſiſted only of a plain black dreſs, and a bandeau of the ſame, that confined her hair,—with her poliſhed, animated, but modeſt and unaffected manners, ſo gained their admiration, that, at the expiration of two hours, they parted from her with regret, particularly Mr. Belmont, who declared, as he returned to the Hall, that the two laſt hours had been ſo deceived in their progreſs by enticing pleaſure, that they were abſolutely the ſhorteſt he had ever ſpent.

After this introduction, Euphraſia was frequently a viſiter at the Hall, where her pleaſing manners ſoon made her the unrivalled favourite of the Belmont family. As, in theſe viſits, it was generally evening before ſhe returned, of courſe Mr.

Belmont could not be guilty of ſo much incivility as not to ſee her home; which gave him ſuch frequent opportunities of diſcerning the expanſion of her mind, and liſtening to her noble ſentiments, refined by a liberal education, that it can be no matter of aſtoniſhment he was always ſo willing to attend her. Beſides, he formed a very great friendſhip for Mr. Mortimer, which obliged him ſo often to enter the humble roof of modeſt worth, that he was much more conſtantly at the Curate's than at Sir Hugh's; though I make no doubt but that my ſagacious readers will be more apt to impute the cauſe of his frequent viſits to the attractive charms of Euphraſia's converſation, than to any ſincere friendſhip for her guardian. I may perhaps coincide with them; at leaſt ſo far as to confeſs, that I do not know what elſe would have had power ſufficient to enable him to withſtand the forcible perſuaſions of Sir Hugh to ſtay, or the ſatirical raillery of the good-natured lively Emmeline for going.

Anna's time was ſpent with equal pleaſure; for when his ſiſter could not leave her company to converſe with her about Montgomery, ſhe would frequently read thoſe authors which ſhe judged it moſt probable he approved; when, who that ever loved like her can eſteem her the leſs, if when meeting with any particular paſſage which his pen had noted for any pleaſing ſingularity, ſhe preſſed it to her lips? Love makes his votaries very whimſical, often very abſurd, and capable of receiving the higheſt degree of happineſs even from the moſt trifling thing, if it belongs to the object beloved. My readers are, no doubt, acquainted with this (at leaſt better than I, who have only obtained the art of painting the paſſion by the deſcription of others), and cannot therefore be ſurpriſed at the pleaſure ſhe took in ſitting in thoſe chairs where fancy told her he had often ſat, and flattering hope aſſured her he had ſometimes reflected with pleaſure on thoſe hours, gilt with refined happineſs, which he had ſpent in their ſociety at Belmont Lodge. There was not the moſt trifling thing in this room, which, as ſhe beheld it, did not impart the moſt ineffable delight, from the conſciouſneſs that Montgomery had placed it there. Even when viewing the country from his window, her eyes would reſt with ſecret pleaſure on any particular ſpot, diſtinguiſhed by natural beauty from the reſt, by ſuppoſing that it had alſo attracted his admiration. But, notwithſtanding the melancholy harbinger of ſhivering decrepit winter, (the chilling North Eaſt gale), began to deface the fair features of Nature, yet ſhe conſtantly ſpent the greater part of her leiſure hours in one particular walk; it was a ſmooth graſs path, planted on either ſide with a quincunx of ancient elms, in whoſe intermingled branches the rooks had built their airy neſts, forming it the ſolitary retirement for meditation; and extended from the ſide of the houſe to the river Severn, which riſing near Llanidlos, takes its courſe by Montgomery, Welchpool, Shrewſbury, Bridgnorth, Glouceſter, and Newnham, and falls into the Briſtol Channel. This was her favourite haunt, where ſhe would walk for an hour or two together, unmindful of the weather, that ſhe might have the pleaſure of reflecting on Montgomery, fearleſs of intruſion.

But I do not conceive that this walk would have had ſuch ſecret charms, and have been by her ſo conſtantly frequented, had not Emmeline informed her that it had been Montgomery's favourite retreat.

The trees, ſtripped of their ſummer foliage, proclaimed the faſt advance of winter, and bleak November winds had already admoniſhed the birds of paſſage to take their flight ere inhoſpitable December enſlaved the earth in frozen bonds, preventing it from yielding them the neceſſary food to ſupport nature. The ant, the humble emblem of induſtry, had laid up its frugal ſtores to ſhield it from anticipated want, and to ſupport it through the inclemencies of the rigorous ſeaſon; whilſt the robin, that of all the feathered inhabitants of the air, is the leaſt afraid of man, ſought, on expanded wings of ſanguine hope, the cities populated by human beings, where it ſtrained its little throat with cheering ſounds of grateful melody, to inſpire the heart of humanity with gratitude to repay its humble but ſtrenuous endeavours to pleaſe, with the hand of benevolence.

As the country diſplays very few beauties whilſt tyrannic winter rules with deſpotic ſway, Art is allowed to flouriſh in the gay metropolis, where ſhe opens her inexhauſtible treaſures of inventive genius to attract the approving encomiums of admiring Faſhion and Fortune, who gratefully promote her endeavours to impart contented pleaſure, with the generous hand of liberality. Beneficence, the guardian genius of the Court and city, favours her ſucceſs with an encouraging ſmile; willing to contribute to the happineſs of Generoſity and Humanity, who, though adorning the circle of ſoft grace and elegance where Royal benignity preſides, can ſtep from the ſphere of Grandeur to relieve, with a charitable hand, the preſſing exigencies of the offspring of Misfortune,

fortune, and pay the ſympathizing tribute of Pity's pellucid pearl due to the child of Sorrow, as ſhe relates the affecting ſtory of complicated woes.

The ſeaſon having ſo far advanced, Sir Charles Belmont talked of leaving the Hall to viſit the metropolis. Sir Hugh, who admired the lively Mr. Belmont for his perpetual flow of cheerful good-humour, and his lively ſallies of ſpontaneous wit, whilſt he eſteemed the lovely and amiable Anna as his daughter, could not bear the thoughts of parting with ſuch ſociety; but liſtened to the ſolicitations of the ſprightly Emmeline, and agreed to accompany them. This intelligence contributed greatly to the ſatisfaction of all parties; but not one received it with more apparent pleaſure than Anna, nor were any ſo much depreſſed as the poor Euphraſia. But it was not to be wondered at, when Mr. Belmont had but the preceding day avowed a paſſion for her, and ſhe, in terms of bluſhing delicacy, replied, in faltering accents, that his attentions were not diſpleaſing.

Though fond of the pleaſures and amuſements of the metropolis, Mr. Belmont was far from being pleaſed at the idea of returning to them, and leaving Euphraſia ſecluded amongſt the mountains of Wales. He ſecretly indulged a wiſh that ſhe could accompany them, which after turning in his imagination, and inſpecting with all due regard to propriety, did not appear ſo prepoſterous an inclination, but that it kept within the boundaries of probability. He weighed it in the balances of poſſibility—it preponderated; and overjoyed, he went to ſeek Anna in her favourite walk, determined to make her his confidante, and to perſuade her to aſk Lady Belmont to invite Euphraſia to ſpend a month or two with them in London.

In this reſolution he overtook Anna, who was penſively purſuing her walk, with Sherlock on Death in her hand; which he obſerving, ſaid—

"Little contemplative, you muſt condeſcend to throw aſide your ſublime reflections on mortality and eternity, to converſe with me morally and philoſophically on the virtues of the living, and to give me your advice."

"Well, my dear George," ſaid Anna, ſweetly ſmiling, "tell me the nature of your diſorder, and I will attempt to draw up a preſcription; though I am afraid the event will prove me a falſe pretender to phyſic!"

"No," ſaid Mr. Belmont, "I am convinced that you have already had ſufficient experience in the ſymptoms of my complaint to authorize you to preſcribe, if I required a cure; but, in truth, the poiſon is ſo delightful, that I would not accept an antidote on any terms! In ſhort, my little phyſician, every external ſenſe, and intellectual idea are engroſſed by rapacious love, that has taken entire poſſeſſion of my heart and mind; and it almoſt diſtracts me when I think of leaving Euphraſia Howard."

"I hope, George, your expectations are raiſed on a better foundation——" than mine, ſhe would have ſaid; but the ſigh of intruding recollection ſmothered the half-articulated ſentence.

"Mine were yeſterday confirmed!" ſaid Mr. Belmont, affectionately preſſing her hand as he gueſſed the ſubject of her thoughts. "It was but yeſterday my dear Euphraſia's declaration that my attentions were not diſpleaſing, made my hopes flouriſh in the ſunſhine of creative fancy; but this miſtimed propoſition of ſeparation threatens to blaſt the bud of expectant happineſs, unleſs you, my little moraliſt, will find out ſome means to circumvent it."

"Then I am fortunate in having ſo unwittingly anticipated your wiſhes," ſaid Anna, pleaſed at being the unintentional cauſe of removing his anxiety; "for Lady Belmont, who never refuſes a petition when Reaſon is the ſolicitor, promiſed me this morning to invite Miſs Howard to accompany us."

"You do not ſay ſo!" ſaid the delighted Mr. Belmont.

"I muſt own I approve your choice," ſaid Anna; "for the amiable Miſs Howard is very virtuous, and poſſeſſed of many accompliſhments. From the firſt moment I ſaw her, ſhe won my admiration: her engaging qualities have ſince gained her my eſteem; and if the aſſent will in any meaſure enhance your happineſs, I aſſure you that I ſhall be ſincerely happy to acknowledge and receive her as a ſiſter whenever it may be your wiſh to introduce her in the lovely character."

"I muſt then thank you for increaſing my felicity," ſaid Mr. Belmont, tenderly embracing her; "and whenever the perverſe Fates will let Sentiment take Montgomery by the hand, you may depend on finding me willing to return the obligation."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the lively Emmeline, overtaking them, "I proteſt that tender embrace was worth ten thouſand."

"Will you give me leave to repeat it?" ſaid Mr. Belmont, ſmiling.

"No, on my honour!" ſhe replied, with pretended diſdain; "compulſion would deprive it of half its charms."

"Oh!" ſaid Mr. Belmont advancing, "I ſwear none is neceſſary, unleſs you compel me to uſe coercive meaſures."

"Off, you gigantic Patagonian!" exclaimed Emmeline, retreating with well-affected terror, "nor aſſail an undefended Liliputian, who came not here to fight, but to aſk you to join your forces to Lady Belmont's, as we are going to ſtorm the temple of Purity and Content, and to carry off Miſs Howard."

The moment Miſs Howard was mentioned, the intended ſalute was forgot by Mr. Belmont, who quickly turned about to return to the Hall; ſaying—

"I will inſtantly join the confederacy, for I am a perfect knight-errant in effecting the emancipation of diſtreſſed damſels!"

Being joined by Lady Belmont, they proceeded to Mr. Mortimer's, where they found Euphraſia ſitting alone in the parlour, with her head penſively reclined on her hand, in the attitude of meditation. Her eyes ſparkled with pleaſure when ſhe perceived Mr. Belmont, but reflected the brilliancy of delight when Lady Belmont, after the cuſtomary compliments were paid, told her that her viſit was paid with the ſelfiſh view of enhancing her own pleaſure by inviting Miſs Howard to adorn their ſociety with her company, for a month or two, in London.—In elegant terms Euphraſia accepted the polite invitation, on condition that Mr. Mortimer would have no objection; ſaying, ſhe would ſend an anſwer to the Hall when he returned, as he was then at the church, performing the burial ſervice.

He returned ſoon after their departure, when ſhe informed him of the viſit, and invitation ſhe had received from Lady Belmont, telling him that ſhe had declined giving a definitive anſwer till ſanctioned by his opinion.

Laying his hat and gloves down upon the harpſichord, which ſtood on one ſide of the room, he ſaid—

"To which ſide of the queſtion does my good Euphraſia's wiſhes incline?"

"They, my dear Sir," replied Euphraſia, whilſt placing his elbow chair by the ſide of the fire, which ſhe never neglected doing the moment he entered the parlour, "ever ſince I was firſt committed to your care have, in uniſon with the injunctions of a dying parent, been made ſubſervient to your inclinations."

"I acknowledge it, my good girl," ſaid Mr. Mortimer, taking his ſeat; "for never ſince I was nominated your guardian, have I had reaſon to exert the authority of one in any ſingle circumſtance. In your tender attentions to my infirmities you have been a ſecond Caroline; nor till I reſign you myſelf to the care of a licenſed protector, will I willingly deprive myſelf of the pleaſure of your converſation for any individual except Lady Belmont."

"Is it your wiſh then, Sir, that I accept the invitation?" ſaid Euphraſia, with ſecret delight.

"Perfectly ſo," replied Mr. Mortimer. "For the world, my dear niece, is too apt to overlook Merit, if cloathed in the garb of humble Simplicity; and Virtue, if diſguiſed in poverty, is frequently diſregarded, and is too generally made to experience the excruciating tortures of reproach and calumny. But this is not exactly your caſe, though if I were to be ſummoned from this world, it might bear ſome analogy to it; as the conduct of a female, if left without a protector, will be ſo minutely obſerved by the nice judging world, that the ſmalleſt deviation from the narrow circumſcribed paths of female honour, brands her with the irremediable ſtigma of eternal infamy. It is for this reaſon that I wiſh to enſure you a friend in Lady Belmont, and would therefore have you make the neceſſary preparations to attend her."

With a light heart Euphraſia ſat down to the table, and opening her deſk, quickly wrote a note, which ſhe diſpatched to Lady Belmont, at the Hall; ſignifying that, with Mr. Mortimer's approbation, ſhe accepted the polite invitation of Lady Belmont, and would taſte the offered cup of happineſs, by partaking of an early breakfaſt with herſelf and family at the ſtated hour on the day appointed for the journey.

Mr. Mortimer then put into her hands a fifty pounds bank note, ſaying—

"Here is wherewithal to exonerate the neceſſary expences of travelling, and thoſe of pleaſure, which, with Lady Belmont, you will purſue with moderation; for, believe me, my good girl, you will at no time be ſo much reſpected by the generality of mankind, as whilſt you are independent. The world is ever more willing to beſtow a free gift than one required, though poverty itſelf be the pleader; and ſo long as a young lady can pay her own debts, ſhe is generally eſteemed, or at leaſt her own miſtreſs; but the moment ſhe borrows, her female friends ſhun her, as they would peſtilence: and though the other ſex may advance as her treaſurers, yet in accepting a ſum from their hands, ſhe lays herſelf open to innumerable dangers. Then take care never to be under a pecuniary obligation to any one when you can poſſibly avoid it, but more particularly to a young

man,

man, my dear Euphraſia; for though the loan be only a pitiful piece of gold, yet if they be certain that neceſſity requires it, they will too often make it a plea to aſſume too great a liberty; when the unfortunate ſufferer, knowing herſelf to lay under an obligation, knows not how to check the licentious preſumption of the unprincipled villain, without flying in the face of gratitude.

Though too often conſidered as an invaluable bleſſing, money is merely a commodity to preſerve good order and unanimity amongſt mankind, in the interchange of the neceſſaries of life; and it is meant that thoſe who have an abundant ſuperfluity ſhould expend it in relieving the miſeries of thoſe who, by undeſerved misfortunes, have been deprived of it. When it is thus liberally diſpenſed, inſtead of being hoarded up in the coffers of avarice, it proves an univerſal good; and I am convinced that the daughter of my amiable ſiſter will never employ it otherwiſe."

Euphraſia then took up the note, and placing it in her pocket-book, promiſed that ſhe would invariably obſerve his admonitory precepts, whatever character in life fate might have deſtined her to ſupport.

CHAP. IV.

NOTWITHSTANDING it was a dark and gloomy morning, in the diſmal month of November, Mr. Belmont roſe an hour earlier than the time appointed for the general rendezvous in the breakfaſt parlour, and equipping himſelf for the journey, ſallied forth to Mr. Mortimer's on purpoſe to have the pleaſure of eſcorting Euphraſia to the Hall; malicious Fortune having prevented him from accompanying her in the journey, as Sir Hugh had ſtrenuouſly inſiſted upon his travelling with him and Emmeline,

line, that the ladies in Sir Charles's carriage might not be too much encumbered.

In the meantime the two families aſſembled in the parlour, and exchanged the compliments of the morning, when Sir Charles, ſurpriſed at his not appearing, expreſſed his wonder at what could ſo retard him, till the ſervant informed him that Mr. Belmont had gone out for a walk near an hour ago.

"By Heavens!" exclaimed the ſagacious Sir Hugh, "that boy has lately grown a keener ſportſman than any in the county, for I'd lay my life that he has riſen thus early for no other purpoſe than to ſtart the game of love at the Curate's."

He had no ſooner concluded than Mr. Belmont entered, leading in the elegant Euphraſia, who was received with welcome pleaſure by the whole family; whilſt Sir Hugh delighted at the quick perception of his diſcerning faculties, rubbed his hands together in token of pleaſure, exclaiming—

"My dear boy, I was remarking you were purſuing the keen ſport of love, though I hardly thought it poſſible that the chace would have ſo ſoon been over."

At this lively raillery Euphraſia's eloquent conſcience ſpoke the language of her heart in her bluſhing countenance; which Mr. Belmont obſerving, replied to Sir Hugh with ſprightly good-humour—

"Sir Hugh Montgomery, you are miſtaken; for Cupid has began the chace, Hymen ſhortly intends to overtake him, and together, in the ſtricteſt bonds of unanimity, they have agreed to purſue it till Death terminates the courſe."

"Oh, ho!" ſaid Sir Hugh, with a look of ſurpriſe; when, addreſſing the ſervant that had juſt entered, he ſaid—"See that the horſes are inſtantly put to, otherwiſe I ſhall never be in at the death."

This repartee, which for Sir Hugh was conſidered wonderfully clever, produced a ſmile on every countenance; and the breakfaſt hour ſlipped away beguiled by pleaſantry and good-humour, after which they ſtepped into their ſeveral carriages to purſue the road to Bridgnorth, which was to be the extent of their firſt day's journey ;—for as they travelled with their own horſes, they did not proceed above two ſtages a day ; and as the diſtance from Montgomery to London was one hundred and fifty-eight miles, they were neceſſarily ſome days on the road.

I forgot to inform my readers, that Sir Charles had taken the houſe they formerly occupied in Groſvenor-Square, for a town reſidence ; and had furniſhed it in the firſt ſtyle of taſte and elegance. Here this happy party, conſiſting of the Belmont family, Euphraſia Howard, Sir Hugh and Emmeline Montgomery, (who had been compelled by the perſuaſions of Sir Charles to become their viſiters), with their attendants, alighted. During their journey no material occurrence had happened to change the courſe of their uninterrupted flow of pleaſure.

On entering the well-known habitation, painful recollection intruded upon Euphraſia's imagination, and ſhe turned aſide her head to hide the ſilent tear of melancholy retroſpection. It was in this houſe where her tendereſt cares had been exerted to promote the eaſe and happineſs of a beloved and affectionate parent; where ſhe had received his laſt injunctions, which filial affection and reſpect had impreſſed indelibly on her retentive memory; and where, when ſhe had laſt turned from it, ſhe had thought herſelf licenſed by misfortune to bid an eternal adieu to Happineſs;—in the purſuit of her ſhe was now, by unexpected and pleaſing events, made to enter the door of this very manſion, where poverty had never pleaded in vain, ſurrounded by amiable friends, and protected by a beloved youth, the deſtined partner of her future joys and ſorrows.

The melancholy which at firſt uſurped the place of vivacity on her expreſſive features, wore off by inſenſible degrees, from the kind aſſiduous attentions of the family to divert her reflections, and the ſoothing cares of Mr. Belmont;—beſides the company which daily reſorted to their houſe, increaſed her cheerfulneſs; for the arrival of Sir Charles Belmont and family was no ſooner known, than it was the ſignal for all thoſe who had ever viſited them, to renew their acquaintance.

With ſuch a variety of attractive graces as now combined to render their ſociety delightful, it can be no wonder that the Earl of Weſtbury, Sir William Fitzhenry, the Honourable Captain Macartney, Mr. Douglas, Lady Gertrude de Montfort, &c. were conſtant viſiters at the houſe. Indeed the contraſt of their ſeveral characters preſerved ſuch perpetual novelty in their converſation, that their company was enchanting;—for Sir Charles was ſerious, but polite and ſociable; Lady Belmont majeſtic, but affable and pleaſing; Sir Hugh, gay and good-humoured, fond of mirth and ſocial glee; Mr. Belmont, lively, ſenſible, and witty; Emmeline, ſprightly and volatile; Euphraſia blended gravity and vivacity; but penſive Anna, graceful, elegant, amiable, and ſenſible, attracted the greateſt ſhare of admiration.

The moſt pointed marks of indifference had not the power to effect any alteration in the Earl of Weſtbury's ſentiments for her, neither had abſence in the ſmalleſt degree obliterated her image from his memory. He renewed his former attentions with augmented diligence and aſſiduity; his hand was mechanically held out to aſſiſt her on all occaſions;—in ſhort, he haunted her like her ſhadow; for if they viſited Lady Gertrude, he was ſure to call; if they went to the Opera, he was generally there; if they viſited either of the Theatres, he was frequently in the adjoining box, when he never failed accepting Sir Charles's invitation to return with them to ſupper; and if they went to either a public or private aſſembly, he ſeldom failed to make one of the party.

Mr. Belmont one day taking up a newspaper, caſt his eyes by chance on an advertiſement, that announced a maſquerade at the Pantheon; when it was immediately propoſed that they ſhould go, as it was the only place of public amuſement they had not yet frequented. A conſultation was then held, when it was unanimouſly agreed that the young party ſhould go in characters, whilſt Sir Charles, Lady Belmont, and Sir Hugh, were to attend them in dominos. What characters to prefer was then the only remaining difficulty; but the lively Emmeline quickly obviated part of it by declaring, that ſhe would aſſume a different character from any that ſhe had yet ſupported on the ſtage of life, and by appearing in the ſober dreſs of Rebecca Prim, would licenſe herſelf for once to preach the doctrines of morality, to rail at the licentiouſneſs of the faſhions, and decry the vanity of mankind. The choice of a character ſo directly reverſe to her own, cauſed a great deal of amuſement, though they did not doubt but that ſhe would very ably ſupport it. Anna then ſaid ſhe would lay aſide mortality, to perſonify the goddeſs Flora. Euphraſia ſaid, as ſhe was a tolerable proficient on the guitar, ſhe would perſonate the Lyric Muſe; and Mr. Belmont agreed to aſſume that of a ſtrolling player.

As it was the firſt time of the ladies appearing in maſquerade, never having acted in any other character than that which ſimple Nature had allotted them, it was agreed that their intentions ſhould be kept a profound ſecret, that they might act with greater confidence. It was alſo propoſed, to avoid ſuſpicion of who they were from their number, that Sir Hugh and Emmeline ſhould go firſt; Sir Charles and Lady Belmont, with Euphraſia and Anna, were to follow; and Mr. Belmont was to go alone; when they were to meet in the room as occaſion or inclination directed.

They had not long returned from the maſquerade warehouſe, where they had been procuring their ſeveral diſguiſes for the ſucceeding evening, before the Earl of Weſtbury was announced. Anna fortunately eſcaped from ſeeing him, having given orders to be denied; for as ſhe fancied her own dreſs, ſhe was neceſſarily engaged with the milliner whom ſhe had employed to make it: but Emmeline, ſoon after his departure, begged for admittance, when, taking a chair by the fire, and playing with a wreath of flowers that lay on the table, ſhe ſaid—

"Upon my honour, my dear Miſs Belmont, I muſt accuſe you of a very great injuſtice!"

"In what inſtance?" interrupted Anna, with ſurpriſe.

"In making your heart invulnerable, by placing the impenetrable ſhield of inſenſibility before it. For what other cauſe could induce you to ſlight the attentions of the divine Adonis?"

"Unconquerable indifference!" ſaid Anna.

"I wiſh," ſaid Emmeline, with arch ſignificance, "he would have ſenſe enough to beſtow his affections where his perſonal merits, and conſtant, polite, and inſinuating attentions would enſure them a favourable reception; he is ſo conſtant in his politeneſs, that he called this morning for no other purpoſe than to bring us tickets, and enſure himſelf the pleaſure of eſcorting us to the Pantheon to-morrow evening."

"Good Heavens, how unfortunate!" ſaid Anna, letting her work fall from her hands; "in ſuch a caſe how could Lady Belmont act?"

"Extraordinarily becoming!" replied Emmeline gaily, "for ſhe very politely accepted his offered tickets; and, after ſtating the true particulars of the caſe, begged that he would not take it amiſs if, in compaſſion to our diffidence, (or ſomething like it), ſhe declined the honour of his company; at the ſame time telling him, by way of an emollient to ſooth his vanity, that ſhe ſhould be proud of his ſociety, if he could diſcern our true characters beneath the maſk of hypocriſy; which he promiſed to endeavour, and departed."

Anna was ſorry that Lady Belmont had accepted the tickets, though ſhe knew not in what other manner ſhe could have acted without being guilty of diſſimulation, or a perſonal affront; and as the paſt proceedings could not be recalled, ſhe reſolved, if poſſible, to circumvent them, by ſupporting her character in ſuch a manner that he might not be able to diſcover her. In which determination I ſhall now leave her to purſue her occupations, which was in adorning her baſket, and placing thoſe flowers in it for which ſhe thought ſhe ſhould have the moſt occaſion.

The carriage was at the door, which was to convey Sir Hugh, dreſſed in a grey domino, and the once lively Emmeline, now transformed into a modeſt Quaker, the perfect picture of neatneſs, to the maſquerade; which they deferred ſtepping into till they had an opportunity of ſeeing the other maſks, who had not yet deſcended from their dreſſing-rooms. Sir Charles, dreſſed in a blue, and Lady Belmont in a white ſatin domino, trimmed with ſilver, were the firſt that entered; when wiſhing to ſee how Emmeline would ſupport her new character, Sir Charles addreſſed her, ſaying—

"How are you, fair repreſentative of purity?"

"Life hath its charms, I thank thee, friend;" replied the modeſt Quaker, "for

Health ſmiles on me; and all my paths are peace, for Innocence is my handmaid."

"Extremely well ſupported," ſaid Sir Charles; who was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Belmont, attired in a rich dreſs, and holding a maſk in one hand, the emblem of Comedy, and a poniard in the other, to repreſent Tragedy. Sir Charles then accoſted him, begging to know what art or ſcience he made his profeſſion.

"One that is fairly worth the ſeven ſciences," ſaid the player, with a graceful motion of his hand, "ſince it comprehends the whole; for I follow the ſteps of the Muſes, and am the beſt actor in the world, either for tragedy or comedy."

"Well performed!" ſaid Sir Hugh. "Nature certainly deſigned you for a player, you declaim with ſo much grace."

Euphraſia next entered, attired in a white Perſian dreſs, whoſe graceful folds ſet off her elegant form to the greateſt advantage. Her guitar was ſlung acroſs her ſhoulder by a Perſian ſcarf, and a little ſtraw hat, tied under her chin, adorned her head, decorated with a ſimple wreath of myrtle round the crown.

"Who art thou, fair nymph?" ſaid the player, advancing, and taking hold of her hand."

"The offspring of Simplicity and Content," replied the female minſtrel; "but doomed by misfortune to ſubſiſt by means of my guitar, which has often ſoothed the ſavage mind into peace, and lulled the ſtormy billows of Sorrow's agitated boſom into a tranquil calm."

Mr. Belmont was prevented from making a reply by the entrance of Anna, habited in a white ſatin dreſs with long ſleeves, over which was a white tiffany robe, bordered round the bottom with a painted wreath of flowers, and drawn up before in feſtoons. A wreath of woodbine and jeſſamine confined it round her waiſt. The half-ſleeves were drawn up towards the ſhoulders, and faſtened with ſmall wreaths of myrtle. Her head was ſimply and elegantly dreſſed, crowned with a garland of moſs-roſes. On her left arm ſhe carried a baſket, fancifully adorned with flowers, and filled with the choiceſt ſelection; and her white ſatin ſhoes were ornamented with a ſimple roſe-bud. Her truly elegant appearance animated the eyes of her affectionate parents with the ſincereſt pleaſure, whilſt her fond brother ſilently breathed a wiſh that Montgomery could ſee her; and every eye in ſilent eloquence confeſſed her pre-eminent attractions.

Sir Hugh and Emmeline, having at length ſeen all their friends, ſtepped into the carriage, which they had ſo long kept at the door, and drove immediately to the Pantheon. On entering it, they found it brilliantly illuminated, and already filled with a variety of characters. A black domino, in company with a white one, paſſed them, looking at them very earneſtly; when again returning, the white one entered into converſation with Sir Hugh, whilſt the black domino, addreſſing Emmeline, ſaid—

"Can you, fair Modeſty, regard with patience the vanities of the world?"

"Indeed, friend," replied Emmeline, "I cannot anſwer thy interrogation, as I have not yet regarded thee; but not expecting to find thee here, I did not doubt but that Happineſs might be found."

"You are very ſevere, Morality," rejoined the maſk, "but do you know me?"

"Verily I ſay, I know thee for the child of Vanity," replied Emmeline, "fond of the ſublunary pomps and honours of this wicked world: but I tell thee, friend, they are inſubſtantial pageantries, the works of Satan to lure thee to deſtruction."

"Verily, my youthful monitreſs," replied the maſk, "your tongue has ſuch bewitching powers of perſuaſion, that I could almoſt ſubmit to become a convert to the doctrines it teaches."

"Become one of the faithful," ſaid Emmeline, "and thou ſhalt be received within the encircling arms of Peace; whilſt Rebecca Prim ſhall conduct thee to Righteouſneſs. For her ways are the ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace."

She was then ſurrounded by a group of characters, when a Venus addreſſing her, ſaid—

"What haſt thou to do, thou prudiſh daughter of Purity, amongſt the votaries of Venus and Pleaſure?"

"Ere thou queſtioneſt me, friend, aſk thine own heart why thou tempteſt man to ſtray from virtue, by making him a partaker of thy voluptuous pleaſures. Verily I ſay, thou daughter of Sin and Wickedneſs, thou wouldſt do well to re-aſcend to Olympus, unleſs thou wilt conceal thy form with the garb of modeſty; which, till thou doſt, thou muſt not offend the eyes of Rebecca Prim."

"Preſumptuous fool!" ſaid the offended Deity, turning away with contempt, "Venus tarniſhed the luſtre of her dignity when ſhe condeſcended to converſe with ſuch a ſenſeleſs being."

"Madam," ſaid Sir Hugh, "I fear you acted very contrary to your character when you addreſſed Virtue."

"Arrogant mortal!" retorted the divinity, "your preſumption and brutality prove you equally a ſtranger to love and beauty: but beware, for Venus is not often ſlighted with impunity."

Emmeline was now accoſted by Aminadab Piety, a member of her ſect, who held forth to her with true characteriſtic eloquence, which gave full play to her talents, and obliged her to uſe the greateſt circumſpection in ſupporting her character with due propriety.

In the meantime Lady Belmont and Euphraſia entered, followed by Sir Charles and Anna. This elegant quartetto ſoon became the object of general obſervation; but every maſk ſeemed ambitious to addreſs the lovely Anna.

Captain Macartney had been informed by the Earl of Weſtbury that the Belmont family intended being at the Pantheon; and in the character of Time, dreſſed in a cloſe ſatin waiſtcoat and pantaloons, with an hour glaſs in one hand, and a ſcythe in the other, he had addreſſed moſt of the characters, in hopes of diſcovering Anna; but none had yet appeared ſo worthy of the original as the elegant Flora. Tripping lightly over the ground, he therefore advanced towards her, ſaying—

"If you were a mortal, celeſtial goddeſs, the heart of Time could not direct his hand to furrow your beauteous face with the wrinkles of age, neither could his ſcythe mow down your roſes of life, which he would wiſh to bloom eternally; but as your immortal deſcent precludes him from ſhewing you any favour, accept his fervent wiſh, fair Flora, that every moment of your time may be winged with pleaſure; and may every hour which his glaſs ſhews in rotation as they paſs, bring in a freſh portion of felicity to augment the ſtores of happineſs which your merits claim as a tribute!"

Anna was going to reply, but he tripped away, ſaying—

"Time is ever on the wing."

A female, attired as Vanity, next advanced, with a mirror in her hand, in which ſhe was conſtantly admiring herſelf; when, addreſſing Anna, ſhe ſaid—

"A flower from the baſket of Flora to deck my boſom, would abſolutely make me irreſiſtible."

Anna ſelected a tulip, and gracefully preſenting it, ſaid—

"The ſcentleſs tulip flouriſhes in pride,
"But all its merit is—a fine outſide;
"In Vanity a ſemblance then we find,
"External beauty, but an empty mind!
"Then ſince in merit they ſo well agree,
"Accept this flow'r, the gaudy type of thee."

Sir Charles and Lady Belmont looked aſtoniſhed, not knowing that ſhe had any taſte for poetry; but were prevented from making any remarks by the advance of the black domino, whom Anna had ſeen converſing with Time. The ſize of his perſon which was ſcarcely enough diſguiſed to prevent diſcovery, made her ſuſpect that it was the Earl of Weſtbury. Politely bowing, he ſaid—

"Have you, divine goddeſs, a flower to beſtow on an humble mortal, whoſe virtues will have power to cure the painful wound of ſlighted love that rankles in his heart?"

Taking a Narciſſus from her baſket, Anna ſaid—

"Narciſſus pin'd in ſad dejection
"To court his ſhadow in the ſtream;
"He lov'd th' illuſive fond reflection,
"But life receded like a dream:
"As ſelf-love then's ſo much the faſhion,
"Accept this flow'r that bears his name;
"And as it is your ſelfiſh paſſion,
"Let his remembrance quench the flame."

The domino, who was in fact the Earl of Weſtbury, accepted the flower, and replied, with a ready impromptu—

"By Jove 'tis falſe—Sweet Flora, you're unkind!
"This heart o'erflows with love the moſt refin'd,
"For charming Belmont only can compare
"With you—ſo graceful, elegant, and fair."

With an expreſſive motion of her hand and arm, Anna replied, as ſhe advanced towards Lady Belmont, to avoid, if poſſible, his farther importunities—

"Th' immortal Flora boaſts no other name,
"Which proves, weak mortal, thy aſſertion's vain."

The Player now advanced towards them, when, juſt as he was going to addreſs Euphraſia, the black domino interrupted him by aſking what he profeſſed himſelf.

"The beſt actor in the world," replied the pompous declaimer, "either for Tragedy, Comedy, Hiſtory, Paſtoral, Paſtoral-comical, Hiſtorical-paſtoral, Scene undividable, or Poem unlimitted. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light: for the law of writ, and the liberty, I am the only man!"

"You are a ſingular being," replied the domino, "yet I preſume nothing is more unlike itſelf than your real and pretended occupation."

"I do profeſs to be no leſs than I ſeem," replied the Actor, "to love him that is honeſt, to converſe with him that is wiſe and ſays little, and a very honeſt-hearted fellow."

"Then you are indeed a prodigy!" ſaid the domino; "for honeſty in a maſk is ſeldom to be met with. But I will now take my leave of you."

"You cannot, Sir," replied the Actor, "take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal, except my life."

He then endeavoured to join Euphraſia, but was not able to approach her for the number of maſks by which ſhe was ſurrounded, one of whom ſhe was anſwering, ſaying—

"When Fortune ſmiled on me, and gilt my days with happineſs—when, inſtead of aſking, I could confer a favour, my friends were numerous; but when malignant Fate deprived me of my parents, my pretended friends alſo deſerted me, and I became a wanderer on the world's vaſt ſtage. My only remaining friend was then my guitar, whoſe humble ſtrains have often been the means of procuring me thoſe comforts which were denied to my neceſſities when artleſs eloquence pleaded the hapleſs caſe of ſorrow."

Her elegant ſimplicity gained her univerſal admirers, who aſked her to perform on her favourite guitar; to which requeſt ſhe acceded with modeſt diffidence, and began the ſymphony with ſuch execution, that almoſt a general ſilence prevailed; but when ſhe commenced the ſong, deſcriptive of her aſſumed character, ſhe ſung it with ſo much judgment, but ſo ſoft a cadence, that attentive admiration reigned throughout the whole building: when ſhe concluded it, loud plaudits ſhook the dome, and all this motley group of characters united in approving acclamations.

After peace had been reſtored for ſome time, a pink domino, that Anna had not before obſerved, ſtepped up to her, with a light conceited air, ſaying—

"My charming Divinity, you look ſo divinely fair to-night, that I cannot conceive you viſited this terreſtrial manſion for any other purpoſe than to cheat us of our hearts; let me therefore beg a taliſman from your baſket to ſecure mine from the ſhafts of your love-inſpiring eyes."

"Why flatter, boy?" interrupted the Actor; "an honeſt man cannot live by it."

"It is a little ſneaking art, which knaves
"Uſe to cajole, and ſoften fools withal.

"If thou haſt flatt'ry in thy nature, out with't,
"Or ſend it to a Court, for there 'twill thrive."

The conceited domino looked ſomewhat confuſed at this unexpected attack, but was deſtined to experience double mortification; for Anna, preſenting him with ſome flowers, ſaid—

"The London-pride, and ſcented-pea,
"Are hieroglyphic types of thee;
"Like one, thou canſt not boaſt of worth,
"Beyond thine empty name and birth;
"For learning dawns not on thy mind,
"And ſcience leaves thy ſenſe confin'd;
"But on thy perſon ſtrong perfume
"Vies with the ſweet-pea's ſcented bloom."

This was ſo ſevere a laſh, that without returning any anſwer, he ſneaked away; when a Nun paſſing them, counting her roſary, the Actor ſaid, as ſhe paſſed—

——"Nymph, in thy oraiſons
"Be all my ſins remember'd."

She looked up, but immediately caſt her eyes down again, and ſilently walked on, purſuing her devotions; when Time, tripping by Euphraſia "on light fantaſtic toe," ſaid, "Your days, fair Lovelineſs, Time ſhall make glide on in a perpetual ſeries of happineſs; each varying hour, like your guitar, ſhall be harmony and love."

He then addreſſed Anna, telling her that he found it impoſſible to pleaſe mankind; for though he kept the ſame unwearied pace, the one half of the world railed at him for his ſwift imperceptible motion, whilſt the other at the ſame time reproved him for his tardineſs.

Preſenting him with poppies and thyme, Anna replied—

"The happy ſay, your hours too ſwift are paſt,
"Whilſt ſorrow oft reproves you for delay:
"Here's Poppy, then, for one to bind you faſt,
"And Thyme, for woe, to urge you on your way."

He was prevented from anſwering by the approach of a Diana, attended by her woodland train; who, accoſting Anna, aſked her for a flower. She ſelected a lily, and gracefully tending it, ſaid—

"The lily dreſs'd in virgin white,
"Of Dian's mind an emblem true;
"Immaculate, chaſte, pure, and bright,
"By Flora was deſign'd for you."

"Accept the acknowledgments of Diana, thy favourite friend, fair celeſtial," replied the Deity, "by whom thou art not only beloved; for Minerva, the Muſes, and Aglaia, Thalia, and Euphroſyne, are now quarrelling on the heights of Olympus for the pre-eminence of thy friendſhip; whilſt Venus, the moſt inveterate enemy of Diana, who lately deſcended into theſe regions with the malign intent of corrupting the few votaries ſhe can boaſt of, has quitted this ſociety in anger, inſpired by envy and diſguſt, and incenſed that fair Flora's modeſt beauties ſhould engroſs that admiration ſhe had not the power to attract."

A Huntſman addreſſing Diana, Anna walked forward with Lady Belmont, Emmeline, and Sir Hugh, who had juſt joined them. Her eyes were ſoon attracted by the appearance of a new character in converſation with the black domino, who ſhe perceived had engroſſed almoſt univerſal attention, which the lateneſs of the hour, and novelty of the character, equally combined to attract.

My reader's impatience is now, no doubt, ſtrongly excited to know who and what this new character can be; and as neceſſity ſometimes compels me to be good-natured, I will terminate their ſuſpenſe by informing them. It was a female elegantly attired as Britannia, in a light blue ſatin dreſs, trimmed with a ſilver fringe, a helmet on her head, a ſpear in her right hand, and on her left arm a ſhield. But, as I have already gone ſo far in the deſcription, I may as well end their doubts at once, by telling them it was Lady Gertrude de Montfort.

" With her ſpear reſting on the ground near her right foot, which was rather advanced from the other, and her arm gracefully extended, holding it near the top, whilſt her ſhield was ſupported in the exact attitude of grace, ſhe addreſſed Anna as ſhe advanced, in a clear and articulate voice, nothing daunted by the ſilent attention which was paid her, ſaying—

"To Albion's Genius, the guardian of its amiable Sovereign and happy ſubjects, who, ſwayed by the ſceptre of juſtice and mercy, are the cauſe of envy to the ſurrounding nations; to the protector of its mercantile commerce and internal wealth—the unconquerable power that repels the daring invaders of its peace, blaſting their infernal deſigns with deſtructive confuſion; to Britannia, native Genius of this ſea-girt Iſle, wilt thou, immortal lovely Goddeſs, grant a never-fading branch of olive?"

A murmur of applauſe ran through the admiring aſſembly, which was only reſtrained by the advance of the elegant Flora, whoſe every action was minutely ſcanned by her anxious but admiring parents. With modeſt elegance ſhe took from her baſket a ſprig of olive and laurel, and preſenting it with graceful dignity, ſaid—

"Olive and laurel are your due,
"Fair Genius of Great Britain's iſle;
"But all my flow'rs your paths ſhall ſtrew,
"Whilſt Gods immortal give th' approving ſmile."

Saying which, with an action that would even have done honour to the Graces, ſhe took each flower from her baſket, and ſtrewed them before Britannia.

The action met with the approbation it merited; for the black domino firſt ſetting the example, a thunder of applauſe ſhook the aſpiring dome. When the tumult had a little ſubſided, Euphraſia purpoſely ſtruck a note or two of "Rule, Britannia," on her guitar, which was quickly accompanied, even the dancers leaving off to join in the chorus.

When it was concluded, this happy, elegant, and enviable party returned home, to the great regret of the company; where, after having obſerved the neceſſary duties of the evening, they retired to taſte that repoſe Heaven ſeldom denies to the virtuous.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

THE pleaſures of the antecedent evening being innocent, and their virtuous minds at peace with their Creator, no terrific dreams moleſted their night's repoſe;—but ſoft illuſions, pure and happy as themſelves, enlivened their ſpirits, refreſhing ſleep recovered them from their fatigue, and the uſual hour the next morning found them on their knees, returning thanks to that Power who ſo benignly laviſhed on them the various bleſſings of life.

Emmeline's amuſement ſtill gained increaſed pleaſure from reflection; for the black domino, with whom ſhe had a great deal of converſation during the courſe of the evening, appeared ſtill more charming when Anna confirmed her ſuſpicions that it was the Earl of Weſtbury. Between the hours of twelve and one a carriage ſtopping at the door, he was ſhortly after announced, and entered the room where they were ſitting, with the Narciſſus in the button-hole of his coat. Mr. Belmont gave Anna a ſly ſignificant look as ſoon as he perceived it, which the good-natured but ſaucy Emmeline obſerving, reſumed the manner and tone of voice that ſhe aſſumed the evening before, and, addreſſing him, ſaid—

"Verily I tell thee, friend, thou doſt not uſe thy ſiſter as becometh a Chriſtian, and a brother; elſe why do thine eyes betray the ſecret which the immortal Flora wiſhed to have concealed."

Mr. Belmont laughed heartily at this addreſs, which he conſidered as an evaſive artifice to make the Earl acquainted with the character ſhe had appeared in; but fortunately for the bluſhing Anna, he rather ſtudied the manner than the nature of the ſpeech, for with a look of pleaſure and ſurpriſe he ſaid—

"Ha! do I recognize in Miſs Emmeline Montgomery, the pretty, modeſt, moralizing Quaker, who, though ſo partial to, could declaim with ſuch natural and eloquent pathos againſt the ſons of vanity, and the inſubſtantial pageantries of the world?"

"Upon my honour, my Lord," replied the ſaucy Emmeline, "you do me a great honour, though, notwithſtanding, it may be an unintentional one, in aſſerting that I am partial to the ſons of vanity; for I always profeſſed the greateſt eſteem for your Lordſhip!"

Excepting Emmeline, who ſtill maintained her gravity, all preſent joined in the general laugh; though no one expreſſed more merriment at the expence of the Earl of Weſtbury than did the Earl himſelf, till he was interrupted by the entrance of Sir William Fitzhenry and Captain Macartney.

After the polite enquiries were over, uſual compliments interchanged, and the gentlemen taken their ſeats in the circle of elegance, Sir William, addreſſing Mr. Belmont, ſaid—

"Belmont, you ought to have been at the Pantheon laſt night, for it was one of the moſt brilliant maſquerades we have had for ſome time paſt."

The Earl was juſt going to reveal the truth, but Mr. Belmont, giving him a wink to be ſilent, aſked what characters were the beſt ſupported.

"I beg your pardon," ſaid Captain Macartney, bowing to Sir William; when addreſſing Mr. Belmont, he ſaid—

"There were ſo many characters ſo exceedingly well ſupported, Belmont, that to particularize any muſt be committing an injuſtice; yet as Fitzhenry gives his verdict in favour of a female muſician, who to be ſure played and ſung moſt delightfully, it may palliate my fault in preferring a Flora, whoſe elegant appearance was unparagoned, and who diſpenſed her flowers to every character with ſuch appropriate beauty and matchleſs grace, that the whole aſſembly would have been deſperately in love with her, could they have aſcertained her name."

Euphraſia was fortunately not preſent when ſhe was mentioned, but Flora ſtood confeſſed in the bluſhing Anna: nevertheleſs thoſe who ſuſpected the truth, pretended not to obſerve it; and the Earl, taking the Narciſſus in his hand, addreſſed Captain Macartney as he roſe from his chair, ſaying—

"If I am not egregiouſly miſtaken, Macartney, this flower will elucidate the myſtery." When advancing to Anna, he ſaid—"Is not the celeſtial angel that gave this flower, Miſs Belmont, an intimate acquaintance of your's?"

"I will ingenuouſly confeſs, my Lord," ſaid Anna, gracefully inclining her head, "that I have ſome knowledge of the flower, notwithſtanding it was Flora who preſented it to a black domino, who I preſume might be the Earl of Weſtbury?"

His Lordſhip bowed an affirmative; when Sir William, aſtoniſhed, aſked Emmeline if ſhe was alſo there? She ſmiled; while Sir Charles replied—

"If we all for once appeared in maſquerade, Sir William, can you wonder at it, when the world daily practiſe it?"

"Yes I do!" replied Sir William; "for Sir Charles Belmont and his family are ſo unlike the generality of mankind, that for them to appear in diſguiſe, though even for amuſement, muſt neceſſarily aſtoniſh all thoſe who boaſt the honour of their acquaintance."

Sir Charles bowed, whilſt Mr. Belmont replied, with a ſmile—

"Oh Fitzhenry! you have either been learning ſome leſſons in the public ſchool of adulation, or elſe been taking ſome private lectures of our friend Douglas; for I never before had the pleaſure of hearing you make ſo complimentary a ſpeech, which has at leaſt novelty to recommend it."

"The reaſon is ſelf-evident, my dear fellow," replied Fitzhenry; "for I never before had truth on my ſide. But *a-propos* of Douglas—he ſays he never experienced more amuſement than in converſation with a Quaker laſt night; and has abſolutely commiſſioned me to endeavour to find out the witty moraliſt."

"Upon my honour," ſaid Emmeline ſmiling, "my friend, Aminadab Piety, has taken a great deal of unneceſſary trouble in looking for an old acquaintance."

"By Jove," exclaimed Sir Hugh, rubbing his hands, "this is a comical way of expounding riddles!—But we ſhall all come to an explanation by and by, though we take a wide circle to get at it."

Euphraſia then entering the room, Captain Macartney led her to a chair, ſaying—

"We hear you graced the Pantheon laſt night with your preſence, Miſs Howard; and as we are giving our opinions of the different characters, pray which might moſt deſerve your approbation?"

"Nay, you muſt firſt let me aſk whether you were there?" replied Euphraſia, ſmiling. "For if a ſubject knew his Prince was preſent in diſguiſe, he would hardly be fool enough to ſpeak treaſon, whatever he might venture to do were he convinced of the contrary."

"Then in truth I was there," replied Captain Macartney, "though in too humble a character to attract Miſs Howard's attention."

"Then it muſt have been degrading in the extreme!" ſaid Sir Hugh; "for there are very few characters which eſcape female curioſity."

"Eſpecially if it be the model of Macartney!" ſaid the Earl.

"I agree with you, Weſtbury," ſaid Sir William; "but pray let Miſs Howard paſs the ſentence of judgment; then we may perhaps learn whether ſhe did admire him."

"Upon my word," ſaid Euphraſia, ſmiling, "I did not expect to meet ſo honourable a combination in conjoint agreement to place me between two difficulties; for if I do not unintentionally rail at Captain Macartney, the odds are greatly againſt me whether I do not praiſe him: but, as to avoid one danger, I muſt neceſſarily brave the other, there was a Britannia I greatly admired, and whom, I do not doubt, had I ſtaid longer, would have increaſed the good opinion I had formed of her."

"I thank you," interrupted the Earl, gracefully bowing, "as ſhe was perſonified by Lady Gertrude de Montfort."

"Then," ſaid Captain Macartney, "ſhe met with that praiſe in her fictitious character from ſome individuals of the preſent company, which, as Lady Gertrude, ſhe ſo highly deſerves."

Lord Weſtbury bowed his thanks, whilſt Euphraſia continued—

"Then there was Time, a character ſo exceedingly well ſupported, that his admonitions to ſome of the company ought to be recorded; for I am convinced if they were duly obſerved, Vice would ſoon be a ſtranger amongſt mankind."

"You need not proceed, my dear Euphraſia," ſaid Lady Belmont, "for if I do not miſtake, the hour-glaſs is adapted to the hand of Captain Macartney."

He acknowledged it; but to change the ſubject, aſked Euphraſia her opinion of the Actor. But as to ſpeak in the praiſe of thoſe we partially eſteem, whilſt they are preſent, is abſolutely impoſſible, though, at the ſame time there is no ſubject on which we can deſcant with greater eloquence during their abſence, Euphraſia only replied with bluſhes, which Mr. Belmont obſerving, and willing to relieve her confuſion, ſaid, "He thought him a pragmatic coxcomb."

"I am of a very different opinion," ſaid the Earl, "for I thought that character as well ſupported as any in the room; and to convince you that it deſerves ſome praiſe, I heard it ſtrongly reported that he was really an actor from Drury-Lane."

"Upon my honour," ſaid Emmeline, ſmiling, "I never before played at ſo excellent a game of croſs queſtions and crooked anſwers. But, inſtead of a ſtage-player, my Lord," added ſhe, addreſſing the Earl, "you may perhaps have no objection to ſee the Actor in Mr. Belmont."

"Ha, ha, Belmont!" ſaid the Earl of Weſtbury, "I give you joy of the diſcovery, for the performance does you great honour."

The other gentlemen then riſing to depart, the Earl could not with propriety ſtay behind, but paid his compliments at the ſame time, and withdrew, though with great reluctance. As they had paid a very long morning viſit, the family immediately retired to their ſeveral dreſſing-rooms, where they had but juſt time to make the neceſſary alterations in their dreſs before they were ſummoned to dinner.

The ſecond courſe was ſcarcely ſerved up, before Lady Belmont complained of a dizzineſs in her head, and apologizing to the company, left the room, ſupported by the attentive and affectionate Anna, to try the effects of a little air; but though it removed that complaint, a violent head-ach ſucceeded, and, entreated by her daughter, ſhe retired to take a ſhort repoſe, when, after cloſing the curtains, Anna left the room, ſilently breathing a prayer for her recovery, and returned to the dining-parlour at the requeſt of her mother, that Sir Charles might not be alarmed at her ſudden indiſpoſition.

As ſhe entered, Sir Charles tenderly enquired after the health of Lady Belmont; when Anna telling him that ſhe had perſuaded her to lay down, as ſhe complained of a head-ach, which ſhe hoped might prove of no worſe conſequence than thoſe to which ſhe had lately been ſubject, he reſumed his knife and fork, though with a countenance which plainly evinced his fears that it was worſe than uſual; in which opinion he was confirmed by the evident uneaſineſs that was portrayed in the penſive countenance of Anna, and her inability to continue her dinner.

Soon as the cloth was removed, and the wine ſet on the table, Anna whiſpered Euphraſia to make an excuſe for her if ſhe was enquired after, when taking a book out of the ſtudy, ſhe aſcended to the bed-room of Lady Belmont. Gently cloſing the door after her, ſhe ſoftly proceeded to the bed, and opening the curtains, found her Ladyſhip in a ſweet ſleep, though her pallid looks greatly increaſed her uneaſineſs; but unwilling to diſturb her, ſhe took a chair by the window, and opening her book, read till twilight cloſed the gates of day.

Lady Belmont then awaking, ſhe again uncloſed the curtains, and tenderly enquired how ſhe found herſelf.

"Ah, my Anna, is it you?" ſaid Lady Belmont; "if you will call for aſſiſtance, or help me to riſe yourſelf, my love, I will deſcend to the parlour, as my head is rather better; for too much indulgence only weakens me."

Expecting her mother to riſe perfectly recovered, Anna was ſhocked to hear her complain of weakneſs, and aſſiſting her to riſe, ſhe ſupported her to the parlour. The family were not leſs afflicted or aſtoniſhed at the ſudden alteration in her countenance when ſhe entered; for by all ſhe was equally beloved. Sir Charles inſtantly ſupplied the place of his affectionate daughter, and tenderly taking the hand of her Ladyſhip, ſaid—

"My beloved Anna, what is the cauſe of your ſudden indiſpoſition? Let me ſend for a phyſician, my love, before your diſorder has time to gain ſtrength?"

With this propoſition Lady Belmont would not comply, as ſhe aſſured Sir Charles it was only a ſlight and temporary illneſs, moſt likely occaſioned by the fatigues of the laſt evening, from which ſhe flattered herſelf ſhe ſhould ſoon recover. Sir Charles ſhook his head; he feared the ſymptoms threatened a long illneſs; but as he knew that ſhe never liked to have advice till neceſſity compelled her, he thought he would poſtpone renewing his entreaties till he ſaw what alteration another night's repoſe might effect.

The next day no material change was diſcernible either for the better or the worſe; and, convinced that a ſlow fever was her diſorder, Sir Charles again intreated her to have the advice of a phyſician;—but flattering herſelf with the illuſive hope that each revolving night would renovate her health, with the mildeſt evaſions ſhe ſtill procraſtinated acceding to his requeſt. The anxious looks, the tender cares of her affectionate children; the mild and conſtant attentions of the amiable Euphraſia, who already conſidered her as her mother, and the beloved parent of the deſerving Belmont; the melancholy features of Sir Charles, that were ſtamped with the impreſſion of his diſtreſſed mind; and the tender and friendly concern that was expreſſed by Sir Hugh and Emmeline, all conſpired to make her exert herſelf to appear better than ſhe really was, and for another week, not a ſingle murmur or complaint eſcaped her patient lips.

Convinced at length that ſhe rather grew worſe than better, ſhe expreſſed a wiſh to return to Belmont Lodge, aſſuring Sir Charles that if the change of air did not immediately effect a reformation in her conſtitution, ſhe would comply with his deſires, and take the advice of her phyſician. Preparations were accordingly made for the journey with the greateſt diſpatch, and on the day preceding that fixed on for their return to the country, their friends took leave of them with regret, particularly Lady

Gertrude de Montfort, and the Earl of Weſtbury, who had flattered himſelf that his conſtant endeavours to pleaſe might have effected ſome favourable change in the ſentiments of the lovely Anna, which the due, though mortifying, obſervance he had paid to her wiſhes, conveyed to him by Lady Gertrude, that he would deſiſt from any farther declaration of his paſſion for her, he thought might have ſubdued even a harder heart than her's, eſpecially as his looks and actions had ſufficiently expreſſed his attachment unſhaken.

By the earneſt deſire of Sir Charles, who thought his daughter would feel the affliction leſs in company with a friend, who would generouſly participate in her troubles, neceſſarily occaſioned by the ill ſtate of health of Lady Belmont, Euphraſia withdrew to the ſtudy in the evening, and wrote to Mr. Mortimer, which Emmeline promiſed to ſend; ſtating the diſorder of Lady Belmont, and the wiſh of Sir Charles, if it were not diſcordant to his, that ſhe would be the friend and companion of his daughter till the iſſue was determined; which ſhe greatly feared would prove contrary to the wiſhes of every one who was acquainted with Lady Belmont's virtues.

Outriders were previouſly diſpatched the next morning, that nothing might retard them on the road; and, accompanied by their retinue, and Sir Hugh and Emmeline, who intended to proceed with them as far as Bewdley, they ſet out on their journey.

Lady Belmont ſupported the fatigue of travelling the three firſt days with tolerable eaſe; but on the evening of the fourth day, when ſhe alighted at the principal inn in Stratford upon Avon, ſhe complained of unuſual wearineſs, and a great oppreſſion at the breaſt. Sir Charles tenderly adviſed her to retire to the bed prepared for her; but, unwilling to augment the anxious concern he already expreſſed for her, ſhe endeavoured to appear cheerful; but the effort was evidently conſtrained, for ſhe had ſcarcely ſat down to partake of an early ſupper, before ſhe fell back ſenſeleſs in her chair. Anna, who had purpoſely taken the ſeat of Emmeline, and Euphraſia, who ſat on the oppoſite ſide of the table, immediately roſe to ſupport her, and applied the uſual remedies; whilſt Sir Charles, with diſtracted looks, roſe from the table, and rang violently at the bell for aſſiſtance. In the meantime Lady Belmont revived; and when the ſervant entered, deſired him to ſend up Mrs. Harvey, her own woman. Sir Charles and Mr. Belmont then ſupported her to the apartment deſigned for her; and when her maid entered, they returned to Sir Hugh, whilſt the gentle Anna aſſiſted in putting her to bed.

Notwithſtanding ſhe had had a very debilitating perſpiration during the night, and had frequently talked very incoherently, yet ſhe appeared ſo deſirous of purſuing her journey, and ſo exceedingly anxious to reach Belmont, that Sir Charles, who thought the uneaſineſs of her mind, if he refuſed, would only tend to heighten her fever, complied with her requeſt, and ordered the carriages to be immediately prepared.

Her own inclinations tended in a great meaſure to enable her to ſupport the fatigue of the three enſuing days; but during the courſe of the two laſt ſtages, her anſwers to ſeveral queſtions put to her, ſhewed a ſlight alienation of her mind, which ſeemed to increaſe as they drew towards Belmont. At Bewdley, Sir Hugh and Emmeline took an affectionate leave of them, to purſue the road to Montgomery Hall; but when Emmeline bade Anna adieu, who was ſo affected as to be unable to ſpeak, ſhe caught the diſorder, and affectionately preſſing her hand, quitted her in tears; not only occaſioned by diſtreſs at parting with her friends, but equally produced by ſorrow at leaving Anna in ſo much trouble.

The parting was equally affecting to every one, though their ſorrow might have been more eloquently expreſſed at any other time; for ſelfiſh conſiderations were now baniſhed, as every idea was concentrated in Lady Belmont, whoſe agitation was very great when parting with Sir Hugh, as ſhe conſidered that he might poſſibly be the father of her Anna; but when ſaluting Emmeline, a tear ſtarted in her eye, and ſlipping a ſmelling-bottle into her hand, ſhe ſaid—

"Accept, my dear girl, what I feel will be my laſt remembrance!"

Sir Hugh replied, "he hoped not;" and haſtily left the room with Emmeline. Sir Charles was ſhocked; he feared the fatal preſage would too ſoon be verified. Mr. Belmont, who moſt tenderly loved his amiable mother, turned pale, and walked to the window to conceal his emotion. Anna could no longer reſtrain her grief, and haſtily left the room to give vent to her ſorrow; whilſt the tender Euphraſia exerted herſelf to inſpire Lady Belmont with more flattering hopes.

Their horſes having taken ſufficient refreſhment, as they had but a few more miles to proceed, Lady Belmont was aſſiſted into the carriage, and the reſt of the family ſtepping in after her, they purſued their journey without any material occurrence happening to retard them.

Whether it was exceſſive weakneſs, or her ſenſations at returning to the Lodge after ſo long an abſence, I know not, but as the carriage drew up to the gates, ſhe trembled exceſſively; and as ſhe was endeavouring to ſtep out of it, ſhe fell ſenſeleſs into the arms of Sir Charles, who was waiting to receive her. Unprepared for the ſudden ſhock, he ſtaggered back a few paces; which Anna perceiving, and fearful he would let her mother fall, uttered a faint ſcream; but, quickly recovering himſelf, he aſſured her all was ſafe, and proceeded with Lady Belmont in his arms into the houſe; when being informed that her room had been prepared for her reception, he aſcended the ſtairs with her, and gently reſting her on the bed, ſupported her, whilſt Anna adminiſtered ſome hartſhorn and water.

Euphraſia and Mrs. Harvey then entering, Sir Charles retired whilſt they aſſiſted in putting her to bed, and immediately diſpatched a meſſenger to the phyſician at Bridgenorth, requeſting his inſtant attendance. He ſhortly returned with the courier, and after examining the ſymptoms of her complaint, and drawing up a preſcription, he retired with Sir Charles; who, begging to know exactly the true ſtate of her diſorder, without extenuation or palliation, he told him ingenuouſly that her complaint was a nervous fever, attended with every fatal ſymptom; that he knew not how to flatter him with any hopes of her recovery, for if there were any, they were very precarious; that her ſpirits ſhould be kept up, though, at the ſame time, it was abſolutely neceſſary ſhe ſhould be kept exceedingly quiet, as every trifling noiſe agitated her mind, and conſequently increaſed her fever; and that he would call early the next morning to ſee what alteration the medicine and diet he had preſcribed might effect. Saying which, he took his leave, and departed.

The greateſt punctuality was obſerved in complying with the phyſician's orders, and the utmoſt ſilence prevailed throughout this ſpacious manſion; but it was of very little uſe, for Lady Belmont ſoon became inſenſible to every thing around her, and remained in a perfect ſtupor, neither hearing nor ſeeing any thing.

The medicines ſoon after came, and Sir Charles himſelf carried them up to the apartment of his beloved wife. Mrs. Harvey took them from him, and on opening them, found one was a muſk medicine, and the other a bliſter, to be immediately applied to the head. Anna turned pale, whilſt Sir Charles, with a deep ſigh, and a deſpairing look, kiſſed her pale lips in extreme agony, and deſcended to the parlour, to communicate the melancholy tidings to Mr. Belmont, who was ſitting with his arms folded, abſorbed in his own diſtreſſing reflections, with his eyes intently fixed on the fire.

Though fatigued with her journey, Anna firmly perſiſted in ſitting up with the nurſe, by the bed-ſide of Lady Belmont, the whole night: Euphraſia wiſhed to accompany her, but being afflicted with a very bad head-ach, ſhe ſuffered herſelf to be perſuaded to retire to her bed, which was in the adjoining room, Anna promiſing that if any material alteration for the worſe took place, ſhe would inſtantly call her. But Euphraſia enjoyed an undiſturbed repoſe, for Lady Belmont continued in the ſame torpid ſtate throughout the night.

When the phyſician arrived the next morning, he approved of every thing which had been done for her, though at the ſame time he adviſed Anna to lay down to recruit her ſtrength, as her attendance was ſuperfluous, ſaying, ſhe muſt prepare herſelf for the worſt, as he greatly feared neither human abilities nor inclinations, combined in a league to ſave her, could poſſibly preſerve her from death. As Sir Charles was ſitting in the room, the picture of dumb deſpair, ſhe haſtily withdrew, that ſhe might not increaſe his ſorrow by her own. Mr. Belmont, who was juſt entering as ſhe left the room, ſtruck with her majeſtic mien of ſilent ſorrow, and the anguiſh of her mind ſo eminently depictured in her ſaddened features, followed her into her room, when tenderly enquiring the cauſe of her additional ſorrow, ſhe burſt into a paſſionate flood of tears, that ſomewhat relieved her oppreſſed heart, ſaying, in broken accents, interrupted by deep ſighs—

"Oh George, we muſt loſe the beſt of mothers!—the moſt incomparable of her ſex—that pattern of excellence!—Oh my dear brother, that paragon of virtue is pronounced irrecoverable!—Sir Charles already anticipates, in gloomy imagination, the dreadful termination to his happineſs; and, devoid of all external ſenſe, though racked with mental anguiſh, he ſits motionleſs, with his eyes intently fixed on her pale, lovely countenance, the ſilent image of woe. He will not, he cannot long ſurvive the loved, the beauteous wreck, wherein he has placed his freight of mundane bliſs! No!—he will ſhortly ſeek it on the ſhores of immortality!—Then what remains for the afflicted Anna but everlaſting miſery?"

Overcome by preſent ſorrow, and the gloomy appearance of futurity, ſhe threw herſelf upon the bed in an agony of deſpair, and hiding her face, gave free vent to her miſery. Mr. Belmont, incapable of affording one glimmering ray of comfort to illumine the hopeleſs, diſmal proſpect of deſpondency, and his fancy tortured by the preſented picture of infelicity, viewed her in ſilence, till interrupted by the entrance of Euphraſia. Advancing towards her, he reſpectfully took her hand, and leading her to the bed, whereon lay the mourning Anna, he ſaid, with a deep ſigh—

"Oh, Miſs Howard, comfort the afflicted Anna! With mild compaſſion infuſe the balm of pity into her wounded boſom, and ſpeak the ſoothing ſtrains of conſolation to the ſiſter of your wretched Belmont!"

There is ſomething ſo truly wretched in the appearance of grief in man, its outlines are ſo ſtrongly drawn in every lineament of his face, that, with Euphraſia, I know not whether I would not ſooner ſuffer the keeneſt pangs of miſery, than be a witneſs to it. Shocked at the deep impreſſion it had ſtamped on his countenance, and knowing ſhe could impart no emollient to mitigate his mental anguiſh, ſhe could not check the riſing tear;—but this at once proved an efficacious remedy; for, grieved to think he had occaſioned it, he would not leave her till, by the adminiſtration of ſoothing pity, he had dried the ſource from whence it flowed.

Euphraſia then told Anna that the phyſician ſaid there was a poſſibility of Lady Belmont lingering ſome time longer in her preſent ſtate; though ſhe thought, that if ſhe maturely conſidered the wretched terms on which the leaſe of life was granted, ſhe could not wiſh the fatal hour, which was to eaſe her of her pain, to be protracted. By remonſtrances and arguments ſhe, in ſome meaſure, calmed the agitation of her mind; and, haraſſed in body, and weakened by exceſſive fatigue, ſhe ſoon had the pleaſure of ſeeing her ſink into the peaceful arms of Sleep.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

LADY BELMONT remained in the ſame inſenſible ſtate the whole day. Sir Charles would not ſtir from her bed-ſide even to partake of a melancholy dinner, but ſat with her hand locked in his, in the attitude of deſpondency, ſilently viewing the ruins which the depredating hand of ſickneſs made of the model of lovelineſs. Sometimes, in the voice of anxious tenderneſs, he would endeavour to recal her wandering ſenſes, imploring them to fix on the partner of her life; but they refuſed liſtening to his earneſt ſolicitations, and her eyes ſtrayed over that face where they were wont to dwell delighted, with the unmeaning ſtare of inſenſibility.

The bliſters which had been applied to ſeveral parts of her body, had obſtinately refuſed the diſcharge of their painful functions,

tions, and towards evening ſhe became light-headed, raving inceſſantly at Sir Charles, and declaring no mortal power ſhould ſnatch her from him; affirming that ſhe had ever fulfilled the duties of an affectionate wife with the moſt willing and unremitting tenderneſs, and ſhe was certain that he would not now willingly conſent to deſert her.—He was not prepared for this ſevere trial of his feelings. In a mind little leſs diſtracted, he paſſionately kiſſed her, declaring he would not forſake her, but ſoon bid adieu to a life not worth deſiring without his Anna. He then tore himſelf from her, and haſtily leaving the room, went and threw himſelf on his own bed, in a ſtate little ſhort of diſtraction; where, overcome by hunger and watchfulneſs, not having taſted a morſel of any thing the whole day, ſleep kindly ſhed a ſoft oblivion over his ſenſes, and in a temporary forgetfulneſs deprived him of the recollection of his ſorrows.

Nature at length, worn out by the forced exertions of a wild delirium, conſigned

Lady Belmont to repoſe; and Anna, who had reſumed her ſtation by her for the night, by gentle entreaties at length prevailed on her brother and Euphraſia to retire to their reſpective apartments; the nurſe alſo lent a willing ear to her perſuaſions, and reſting her head againſt the back of her eaſy chair, ſoon fell into a ſound ſleep; when, Anna taking advantage of the profound ſilence, in fervent devotions ſpent the early part of the night, ſupplicating Heaven for the reſtoration of her mother's health and reaſon.

The clock was juſt on the ſtroke of twelve when a gentle tap at the door arreſted her attention; and riſing from her knees, ſhe ſoftly proceeded to open it, but was greatly ſurpriſed at ſeeing Euphraſia, attired in her night-dreſs, whoſe pale looks beſpoke her mind ill at eaſe. Softly entering, ſhe enquired after Lady Belmont, ſaying ſhe had been haunted by the moſt terrific dreams, and could not, in ſpite of her endeavours, again compoſe herſelf to ſleep till ſatisfied of her ſafety.

Though very far from ſuperſtitious, Anna trembled, ſhe knew not why; yet at the ſame time ſhe told her, that her mother was ſtill in a ſweet ſleep, and breathed with leſs difficulty, ſaying, that if her prayers could have any effect, ſhe hoped it might prove the reſtorative of her health and reaſon. Euphraſia ſighed, "Impoſſible!" and, lighting her candle, ſaid, ſhe would return to dreſs, as ſhe would not venture to go to ſleep again, to be made ſtill more miſerable.

She had not long returned before Lady Belmont heaved a ſigh, and opened her eyes. Fixing them on Anna, who ſat by her ſide, ſhe held out her feeble trembling hand, and, in a weak tremulous voice, ſaid,

"Ah, my Anna! why will you injure your health in watching your mother's lambent flame of life?"

Happy to find her mother reſtored to reaſon, Anna did not pay attention to her laſt ſentence; but, preſſing her hand to her boſom, ſaid—

"Oh, my dear Madam! do you know me?"

The nurſe awaking, cautioned her to be ſilent; but Lady Belmont replied—

"Know you, my lovely girl? God forbid I ſhould ever be deprived of the invaluable bleſſing! Yet I fear I have ſtrangely wandered. But where is the kind Euphraſia?"

Euphraſia advanced, and ſilently put her hand in Lady Belmont's; for ſhe had before been a melancholy witneſs to the cloſing ſcenes of life, and was but too well acquainted with the harbinger of approaching death.

"Will you, my love," ſaid Lady Belmont, addreſſing Anna, "gently tell your father and brother that I wiſh to ſpeak with them?"

Anna ſickened; her tottering limbs would ſcarcely ſupport her to the door of her brother's apartment, who, from having expected the ſummons, was not long before he joined her.

They then proceeded to call Sir Charles; ſhe entered alone that he might not be too ſuddenly ſurpriſed, and found him laying on the bed where he had firſt thrown himſelf. His ſlumbers were broken, his countenance portrayed a mind diſturbed, the muſcles of his face were contracted by grief, he heaved a deep ſigh, and called upon the name of Anna! The repreſentative of that Anna was now before him, ſcarcely able to ſupport herſelf; but, compelled to exert her fortitude, ſhe tenderly bade him riſe, and cautiouſly unfolded the ſituation and wiſhes of Lady Belmont. He haſtily ſtarted from his bed, when entreating him to collect all his fortitude to enable him to ſupport the trying ſcene he was going to witneſs, ſhe led the way, Sir Charles and Mr. Belmont following in gloomy ſilence.

As they entered the door, a thouſand intruding recollections flaſhed acroſs the memory of Sir Charles. It was in this very room, where, four-and-twenty years ago, he had taken an eternal leave of his father, Sir

Gregory Belmont. He now ſaw his beloved wife, ſupported by Euphraſia, juſt prepared to launch into the boundleſs ocean of eternity, with a countenance ſo pale, ſo calm, ſo reſigned, ſo intereſting, that pitying angels might have looked, and wept at it. He was ſo affected that he could ſcarcely ſupport his agitated frame from ſinking beneath the burthen of his wretched mind; but taking the arm of his ſon, he walked towards the bed, when falling on his knees by the ſide of Lady Belmont, he claſped her in his arms, incapable of uttering a ſingle word to eaſe his oppreſſed heart. She ſunk upon his ſhoulder, and ſhed the ſacred tear of affection on his boſom; when, again reſuming her compoſure, ſhe ſaid, in a weak voice, whilſt her family ſtood round her in mournful ſadneſs—

"Affliction, my dear Sir Charles, in the laſt moments of receding life, too often inſtils thoſe ſentiments from which the mind ſhould be entirely defecated, that expects ere long to appear before the awful tribunal of its Maker. Sorrow is now uſeleſs;

leſs; for I feel an inward ſenſation that fore-tels the near approach of death: then let not my few remaining moments be rendered miſerable by witneſſing your preſent diſtreſs (ſaying which ſhe looked round at her ſorrowing family), nor embittered by the knowledge that I leave you to regret my loſs! Life is but a ſtated race ſet us to run by an Almighty Power, at the goal of which I have happily arrived the firſt; and truſt that I have ſo fulfilled the duties it has impoſed on me, as to authorize me to look forward with ſanguine hopes of meeting my reward in the manſions of eternity. Then if ever I have unintentionally offended you, Sir Charles, let me now aſk your forgiveneſs, that I may quit this world in peace."

"Oh, my Anna!" ſaid the afflicted Sir Charles, fervently preſſing her hand to his lips, "aſk me not for that which in no ſingle inſtance of your life you have ever given occaſion to merit; but if my wiſhes, my life, will tend to promote your happineſs, take it—it is at your diſpoſal; nor can you tell how willingly I would ſhake off this cumberous load of mortality, to take my aerial flight with you—with you to be imparadiſed in the regions of immenſity, and of infinite duration."

She was evidently diſtreſſed at the deſponding manner in which he ſpoke, and begged that, inſtead of dying, he would think only of preſerving a life ſo deſirable to his children; telling him, that the merit did not conſiſt in not merely ſinking under the weight of calamities, but in ſupporting them with patience and reſignation, and that her death he ought rather to conſider as a bleſſing, as it releaſed her from ſuch extremity of pain.

Exhauſted from ſpeaking ſo long, ſhe reſted on the ſhoulder of Sir Charles, till having collected ſtrength enough to proceed, ſhe took the hands of Mr. Belmont and Euphraſia, and, joining them together, ſaid—

"Heaven conſecrate this union!—Bleſs, ye divine Powers, this junction of hands, where two virtuous hearts have ſo long been united, and render theſe my children as happy in the connubial ſtate as I have been."

Euphraſia's tears, that had ſo long been reſtrained becauſe ſhe would not augment the diſtreſs of the family, now fell in abundant ſtreams of mingled gratitude and ſorrow. Mr. Belmont, though grateful for the generous and unexpected bleſſing, was yet ſo affected at the approaching diſſolution of his mother, that he could not articulate a word. Anna hid her face in the bed-cloaths, to ſtifle her ſobs; but Sir Charles's grief was not to be expreſſed!—Convinced that every language was too limitted to define the agony of his feelings, he let not a ſyllable eſcape his lips; but watched every motion of Lady Belmont as if he expected it would be the laſt, whilſt deep convulſive ſighs were the only index of his mind. Lady Belmont ſaw their ſufferings with pain; but endeavouring not to let it diſcompoſe her mind, that had now made up its accounts with Heaven, ſhe continued thus—

"In Euphraſia Howard, my dear George, you will be ſincerely happy; for her heart I have minutely inveſtigated, every avenue carefully inſpected, and find it worthy of your's in exchange; which is the moſt I can ſay in its praiſe. She is too good ever to offend you willingly; but ſhould the ſlighteſt difference ever take place, recollect that it is your mother's laſt requeſt that it be inſtantly forgiven. I have now only one favour to aſk."

"Oh, name it, Madam!" ſaid Mr. Belmont, falling on one knee, and preſſing her hand to his heart, "name it, I conjure you; for though eternal miſery was to be my portion in the ſacrifice of my deareſt wiſhes, I ſolemnly call upon Heaven to witneſs that I would not deny it."

Lady Belmont was for ſome time unable to reply; but at length told him that it was her wiſh, as he was yet very young himſelf, that he would defer his marriage with Euphraſia till ſhe became of age. To this requeſt he immediately granted his perfect acquieſcence. Being now entirely ſpent with the exertions ſhe had made, ſhe beckoned the mourning Anna to her bedſide, and taking her hand, ſaid, in a very faint voice—

"Tutored in the ſchool of Virtue, my Anna is her moſt favourite pupil; then may every wiſh meet with the accompliſhment her chaſte mind can deſire, and may ſhe ever be directed by her own will! for to you, my lovely girl, I have no injunctions to leave, except that you will ſoon let reaſon check this unavailing ſorrow, and ſupply my place by your filial piety and attentions to your afflicted ——"

Here ſhe was interrupted by a violent hiccough, which ſoon choaked her utterance, and ſhe reſigned her ſoul, unſullied by a crime, in the arms of her diſtracted huſband; with whom ſhe had lived for the ſpace of two-and-twenty years in the ſtricteſt bonds of truth and affection.

The afflicting ſcene that enſued may be eaſier conceived than deſcribed; indeed all deſcription muſt fall ſhort of the original. The once lively Mr. Belmont was now transformed into the ſilent image of deſpair, and ſtood at the foot of the bed, with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on the pallid features of the deceaſed. The wretched Anna had fainted on the bed, and was now ſupported by the afflicted Euphraſia, who for a great length of time adminiſtered the uſual remedies with very little effect. Sir Charles, with a convulſive graſp, claſped the cold remnant as if reſolved never to part from it, and was at length forcibly taken away. But I will not ſhock my reader's feelings with a farther detail of this ſcene of miſery; for by drawing a veil before it, I will obſcure it from their ſight, ſincerely wiſhing that they may never feel the pangs of taking the laſt farewel of ſuch a parent, ſuch a friend, ſuch a companion, or ſuch a patroneſs.—

As a violent ſtorm, when firſt abated, is ſucceeded by a ſullen calm, the dark remains of its ferocious anger not being yet chaſed away from the face of heaven; ſo had the outrageous grief of this family ſubſided, though their countenances were ſtamped with the eminent characters of melancholy:—yet it was not that ſullen ſorrow, which, in preſerving an obſtinate determined ſilence, ſeems to arraign the inſcrutable decrees of an attending and almighty Power; for reaſon had taught them to conſider the diſpenſations of Providence as allwiſe; and after the firſt ſtorm of ſorrow had paſſed, they bore the fatal ſtroke to their happineſs with humble ſubmiſſion and pious reſignation.

Though ſo diſtreſſing to their feelings, they unanimouſly agreed to pay the laſt ſad rites of Chriſtianity to chriſtian worth, and accordingly entered the carriage as chief mourners, to follow the hearſe to the Church. It had no ſooner moved off in ſlow proceſſion, than a mourning coach, which had been waiting at a little diſtance, drove up, and followed it. This unexpected circumſtance attracted their notice, though no ſurpriſe was expreſſed; and the houſehold following, attended by all the villagers, in deep mourning, a gentleman's carriage, which had alſo waited at a ſhort diſtance, drew up, and cloſed this awful and ſolemn proceſſion, which no ſuperfluous decorations adorned; but plain, ſimple, and elegant, its only and its greateſt ornament was the pearl of ſincere ſorrow offered by thoſe who had proſpered beneath the foſtering rays of humanity of the loved Lady Belmont.

During the courſe of the funeral ſervice, which was uninterrupted except by audible ſobs, the gentleman who had ſtepped from the unexpected mourning carriage, took his ſtation near Sir Charles, but purpoſely concealed his face ſo cloſe with his handkerchief, that not a ſingle feature was diſcernible; though his height and graceful figure ſtruck Anna to be that of Montgomery.

After Lady Belmont was interred in the family vault, they returned to the Lodge. On entering the parlour, Sir Charles threw himſelf on the ſofa; Mr. Belmont walked to the window, to conceal his own feelings; and Anna hid her face in her handkerchief on the table, moiſtening it with a plentiful ſhower of tears. In this ſituation they were unexpectedly ſurpriſed by Montgomery himſelf. Mr. Belmont, on hearing ſome one enter, turned from the window; and, ſtruck with pleaſing aſtoniſhment at the unforeſeen intruſion, a tranſient gleam of happineſs ſparkled in his eyes, as advancing towards him, he exclaimed—

"Good Heaven! my friend Montgomery!"

Surpriſed, Sir Charles roſe from the ſofa, where he had been ſitting buried in abſtracted thought, and with a plaintive ſmile evinced the pleaſure his welcome appearance imparted; but the name of Montgomery had vibrated on Anna's ears, and excited a revolution in her heart. She ſtarted from her ſeat with a kind of mechanical impulſe, and actually beheld the original of the cheriſhed image in her heart, looking at her with an expreſſion of ſympathetic pity. She bluſhed, ſhe trembled, ſhe turned pale; and, unable to ſupport the internal conflicting ſtruggles of grief, pleaſure, ſurpriſe, and love, ſhe fell almoſt breathleſs

into

into her chair, but was fortunately prevented from fainting by the friendly relief of tears.

This evident confuſion told Euphraſia, in terms ſufficiently intelligible, the true ſtate of her friend's heart; but too delicate to appear to have noticed it, ſhe endeavoured to relieve it by aſking her to walk to the window, as the diſtreſſing tranſactions of the laſt few days had rendered her too weak to ſupport any ſurpriſe. Anna preſſed Euphraſia's hand in ſilent acknowledgment for her tender attention, and complied with her requeſt; when Mr. Montgomery, having paid his reſpects to Sir Charles and Mr. Belmont, advanced towards her, and taking her hand, ſaid, as he gracefully carried it to his lips—

"Pardon the unfortunate Montgomery, Miſs Belmont, if he has unintentionally wounded your feelings, already too greatly injured, by his abrupt intruſion."

In a faltering voice Anna replied, while the tears ſtarted in her eyes—

"Let Mr. Montgomery impute the manner of his reception to the melancholy ſituation in which he finds us; for ſure that heart will kindly make allowances for the mourning relatives of Lady Belmont, which could induce him to travel ſo many miles to perpetuate her memory with the reſpectful tribute of a conſecrating tear, when he eſtimated her only as a valuable acquaintance."

He bowed; and, after renewing his acquaintance with Euphraſia, conducted Anna to a chair, when taking one himſelf, Mr. Belmont aſked him to account for his ſudden appearance amongſt them, as he thought he had been ſtill in Scotland.

Mr. Montgomery complied with his requeſt, and ſaid that Emmeline ſent him a letter, ſtating the extreme ill ſtate of health of Lady Belmont, and their intended return to the Lodge; which letter reached him at Lauderdale, where he was ſpending a few days with a family before he returned to England; but that as, from Emmeline's account, he had every reaſon to expect the ſpeedy diſſolution of Lady Belmont, he preſented an excuſe to the family, and ordered his carriage and attendants to be ready at an early hour the next morning, as it was his wiſh to take a laſt farewel of a female he ſo highly and deſervedly eſteemed.

"I arrived at the inn at Bridgenorth," continued Montgomery, "the night before laſt, where I purpoſed, as it was then rather late, taking up my night's reſidence. Looking over a weekly newſpaper to beguile the time till ſupper, I perceived the fatal intelligence; and on making enquiries of the landlord, learned the event which has taken place to-day, and which I then agreed ſhould be the time for me to introduce myſelf, as I could not help entertaining the flattering ſentiment that my unexpected appearance might in ſome meaſure alleviate the ſorrow of the worthy members of your family," bowing to Sir Charles.

Though depreſſed with melancholy, Anna could not check the invaſion of ſome illuſive hopes that the energetical manner in which Montgomery pronounced "the worthy members of your family," crowded into her heart; whilſt the humane, friendly, and diſintereſted intention of his viſit, and his generous participation of their diſtreſs, enhanced, if poſſible, her admiration of his virtues.

In the meantime Sir Charles returned his thanks to him in a manner ſo gratefully impreſſive, as to plainly ſhew the high ſenſe he entertained of his conduct; telling him that it only verified the high opinion he had of him, as a man of the moſt infinite humanity, unbounded honour, and unlimitted virtue.

Montgomery ſlightly bowed, intreating he would not beſtow that praiſe which he was not conſcious of deſerving; and immediately changing the converſation, the evening paſſed away with ſerious but tolerable comfort. Indeed his viſit could at no time have been ſo opportunely deſirable, for by being unexpected, it imparted the greater degree of pleaſure; ſo certain it is, however great a contradiction it may ſeem, that we capricious mortals always receive that happineſs which comes ſuddenly upon us, with a much greater degree of ſatisfaction in adequate proportion, than that which we have long anticipated. Beſides, his converſation, always elegantly ſerious, ſuited the gravity of their preſent diſpoſitions, though at the ſame time it had the power to divert their reflections from reſting with forlorn deſpair on a very melancholy ſubject; and though intruding recollection would frequently heave the deep expreſſive ſigh of ſorrow, and drop the bitter tear of retroſpective diſtreſs, yet he quickly diſplaced it by his tender care, and, by his palliative and unremitting attention, ſhortly ſoothed their troubled boſoms into peace.

When he retired to the apartment aſſigned him, he took the candle from his ſervant, and diſmiſſing him, ſat down to the table, when reſting his head upon his hand, he began to reflect on the diſtreſſing ſituation of each individual of the mourning family. The ſettled reſigned melancholy that appeared to have taken poſſeſſion, as an immoveable fixture, of the features of Sir Charles, excited ſuſpicions in his boſom that he would not long ſurvive the loſs of Lady Belmont, whoſe excellent virtues had ſo wholly occupied his heart while living, that now they had perſonally deſerted it, and left only the ſhadow of remembrance to adorn that noble manſion, which had once attracted the admiring eyes of every beholder, it appeared falling into ruins for want of a tenant to keep it in repair. Mr. Belmont, though once lively and comic, he now found mournfully ſad, and ſeriouſly grave; but his appeared only juſtifiable ſorrow for the loſs of ſo excellent a parent; and his feelings were evidently blunted of the poignancy of keen affliction, by the preſence of the loved Euphraſia, who ſpared no pains nor exertions to mitigate his diſtreſs. But when he began to reflect on Anna, a palpitating emotion, quite a ſtranger to his hitherto invulnerable boſom, ſeized his heart. He found her perſonal attractions greatly improved by the hand of Time, and the reſtoration of her health; he found her in affliction, and the knowledge of her diſtreſs inſtantly made him her friend, perhaps more intereſted than he at firſt imagined. He ſaw her with infinite pain ſuppreſs her own feelings, becauſe ſhe would not wake the recollection of her father's ſorrows, momentarily repoſing on the boſom of forgetfulneſs; he ſaw her even endeavour to aſſume a degree of cheerfulneſs, in the hope of creating a ſmile on his countenance; but, failing in the attempt, the tear of diſappointment ſtarted in her eye; his caught the infectious idea, and ſtarting from his ſeat, he paced the room in great agitation. He recalled to his imagination the confuſion ſhe had betrayed on ſeeing him, and attributing it to its true cauſe, love for Archibald Montgomery, he admired the unſhaken conſtancy of a paſſion, to which he had granted no other nurſe than deſpondency, and reproached himſelf with inhumanity for having ſo long been the cauſe of corroding pain to her gentle boſom. The picture of ſuffering lovelineſs he had at laſt drawn in its genuine colours, and was affected. With one hand in his waiſtcoat pocket, and the other in his boſom, he reclined againſt the wall, and, caſting down his eyes, heaved a deep ſigh, the firſt ſymptom of love.

"Surely I love!—Yes, Anna—I, who have ſo often exhauſted my eloquence in declamatory ſpeeches againſt your ſex, in bitter invectives, reflecting on all womankind—am at laſt caught in the inextricable toils of Love by your ſemblance of virtue! Yes, fair mourner, your mental and perſonal merit muſt prove my ample apology for marriage; as your virtues, your mind, your underſtanding will be the clear confutation to my former fallacious arguments againſt it. No more ſhall pangs of love deſpiſed, bedew your woe-worn pillow with the tear of anguiſh; for, as ſoon as your grief is ſomewhat forgot, I will openly avow myſelf your admirer, and by a life replete with tenderneſs, endeavour to repay you for the thorn I once planted in the boſom of the roſe."

Satisfied and pleaſed with this final determination, he prepared to retire to bed, as happy as a ſelf-approving conſcience could make him; where content ſhed over his peaceful ſlumbers the ſoft illuſions of happineſs.

CHAP. VII.

ACTUATED by humanity, Montgomery ſpent the enſuing week with them, although he had not yet ſeen his own family; during which time he had the pleaſure of ſeeing his kind endeavours to beguile them of their melancholy moments, meet with ſome ſucceſs, though not in ſo great a meaſure as he wiſhed them; for when taking leave of the family to return to Montgomery Hall, he ſaw, with uneaſineſs, the cloud of ſorrow again overcaſt the features of Sir Charles, which made him leave him with regret; but as he could not poſſibly indulge a thought of ſtaying longer from his family, he again bade an affectionate and reſpectful adieu, and departed.

Anna ſupported this parting much better than ſhe had done the laſt; for the manner in which he took his leave of her, and the tender attention he had ſhewn her during his viſit, had at length kindled the ſpark of hope in her boſom, which ſhe fanned into a flame by the generous aid of inclination. For, grateful as is a fire to the weary traveller, chilled by a long and dreary journey through the winter's ſnow, ſo is the ſpark of hope to the tender lover, whoſe paſſion had been ſo long chilled by the petrifying cold of deſpondency. But how true is that declamate in Hamlet, that "When ſorrows come, they come not ſingle ſpies, but in battalions!" for ſcarcely had Mr. Montgomery drove off from the door, before the poſtman brought Sir Charles a letter from his banker, ſtating the failure of the houſe to ſo large an amount, that he was ſorry to announce the total loſs of all his money placed in their hands! Sir Charles might now with juſtice ſay, that

"One woe doth tread upon another's heel, ſo faſt they follow!" for the unrelenting hand of Death had ſcarcely ſeparated him from the beloved partner of his affections, before a ſtroke of cruel Fate deprived him of his fortune. But not a ſingle complaint eſcaped the boundaries of his lips; no manifeſt alteration was viſible in his countenance; no external ſymptom ſhewed that he was ſenſible to this laſt misfortune, but a deep heart-rending ſigh.

Silent ſorrow is generally more fatal in its conſequences than outrageous grief, and bears in its appearance ſuch a contemptuous unconcern for every additional affliction, though at the ſame time ſuch a ſettled deſpondency in its looks, that it is conſtantly regarded with terror by thoſe who have any concern in its exiſtence. With ſuch a look did Mr. Belmont now regard Sir Charles, as he ſaid—

"My dear Sir, what new affliction has Fortune kindly ſent, to add to the weight of the burthen that already oppreſſes us?"

This queſtion, and the impreſſive tone of voice with which it was demanded, brought Sir Charles to his recollection; and riſing from his chair, he put the letter into the one hand, and affectionately preſſing the other of his ſon, ſaid, with a faltering voice—

"You muſt prepare, my dear boy, for a very humiliating change in your circumſtances, as five thouſand pounds, in the five per cents, is all your father can now call his own, except this eſtate, and the furniture of the houſe in Groſvenor-Square. But rather attribute the conſequence of this fatal caſualty to misfortune than miſconduct, nor let a bitter wiſh eſcape your lips to the prejudice of my unfortunate friends, whoſe lamentable ſituation is truly pitiable; for I know them to be men of great honour and probity, who could not have committed a diſhonourable action, and lived in peace, though it had been kept a ſecret from the world."

He then withdrew to his ſtudy, which he paced for ſome time with an unequal ſtep;

but convinced at length that the moſt effectual remedy, in the preſent exigencies of his affairs, would be an immediate retrenchment in his houſehold expences, as for the laſt two or three years he had lived up to his annual income, owing to the natural incurring charges of a large eſtabliſhment, and the conſtant claims of humanity upon his purſe, both in public donations and private charities. He ordered his ſervants immediately to attend him, when thanking them for the fidelity with which they had conſtantly diſcharged their ſeveral duties, he told them that misfortunes, as unforeſeen as unexpected, prevented him from requiring the aid of their farther ſervices; and paying them their wages, he diſpenſed with all their attendance, except Anthony, Tomlins, two female houſehold ſervants, and Anna's attendant.

This unwelcome intelligence was received with tears of ſad regret by thoſe who had grown grey-headed in the ſervice of the Belmont family, and accompanied with many proofs of ſincere attachment, which, in ſuch a ſituation, would not often be expreſſed by many of a more liberal education. The venerable old coachman advanced a few paces from the reſt, and with a mournful aſpect, and a low bow, was the firſt who broke the melancholy ſilence, ſaying—

"Bleſs your Honour! I have not ſeen ſo ſad a day as this except when his Honour, Sir Gregory, and my Lady, died, for the five-and-forty years that I have lived in the family; but as your Honour's wages have always been more than I have had occaſion for, I have honeſtly ſaved up four hundred and fifty pounds, which if your Honour will accept, you're heartily welcome to it, and I ſhall think it the beſt day's job I have done for many a year; for 'tis a ſad thing when gentlefolks meets with misfortunes, that have not been uſed to get a living, thof they have given it to many poor creatures; and as I am better able to work than your Honour, I don't want the money, for thof I be old, I am ſtrong and hearty, thank God for it!"

This affectionate addreſs was followed by many ſimilar offers, with which proof of faithful attachment Sir Charles was ſo greatly affected, that he was for ſome time unable to reply; but at length aſſuring them that he had ſtill enough left from the wreck to ſupport him in frugal mediocrity, he thanked them for their generous offers, and diſmiſſed them all except the ſteward, whom he detained to ſettle his accounts.

When he returned to the parlour, where he had left Mr. Belmont, Anna, and Euphraſia, he entered ſo unexpectedly that he ſurpriſed Anna in tears;—ſhe quickly ſtrove to conceal them, but parental tenderneſs made Sir Charles very quick-ſighted, and taking her hand, he ſaid—

"Ah, my Anna, this loſs of fortune diſtreſſes you!—Your merit deſtined you to grace the poliſhed circle of a Court; inſtead of which, misfortune has now rendered you the houſekeeper of your wretched father."

"Oh Sir," ſaid the afflicted Anna, preſſing his hand to her lips, "think me not a wretch ſo deſpicable as to be capable of entertaining one ſelfiſh conſideration while the happineſs of my dear father is at ſtake; it is the neceſſary deprivation of thoſe comforts to which you have been accuſtomed, that is the cauſe of your Anna's grief; for, bleſſed with you, her happineſs is complete, and the white-waſhed walls of a cottage, if it ſheltered you, would, in her eyes, appear more coſtly than the palace ornamented with golden fret-work."

Sir Charles affectionately embraced her, reſolving he would endeavour to conquer his affliction for the ſake of his deſerving children, whoſe meritorious virtues ought to have enſured them a kinder fortune; when addreſſing Euphraſia, he ſaid—

"The good Euphraſia was to have been my ſecond daughter; but will not this fatal misfortune deter her from entering into the family of one, who, comparatively ſpeaking, is little better than a beggar?"

This queſtion excited a tumultuous agitation in the mind of Mr. Belmont, and he waited with extreme impatience for the anſwer, on the iſſue of which depended his hopes of happineſs. But Euphraſia, who ſaw the cloud of anxious ſuſpenſe gathering on his brow, kindly endeavoured to diſſipate it with the ſunſhine of generoſity, by her anſwer to Sir Charles, ſaying—

"I truſt, Sir Charles, that the ſeeds of humanity have been too well cultivated in my heart to fear decay from the temporary ſecluſion of Fortune's ſmiling ſun. When proſperity was the guide of Mr. Belmont, conducting him through the gay parterres of pleaſure, he condeſcended to ſelect me, an humble flower, from the garden of mediocrity, where I was vegetating unſeen in the umbrageous ſhade of retirement, to introduce me to your notice. He placed his affections on me; and I, like the grateful ſunflower, turned mine to the orb from which they drew their exiſtence. It is true that Fortune was then his friend; but my affections were not placed on his expectations,

tions, for I loved him for himſelf alone, and her treachery has only endeared him to the humble heart, which, if he thinks it worth his acceptance, I will not ſcruple to confeſs is more his own than ever."

Mr. Belmont, who had been hitherto ſtanding with his back againſt the wall, and his arms folded, now advanced towards her with gratitude beaming in his eyes, ſaying, he would not regret the loſs of fortune, ſince it had ſhewn his Euphraſia in ſo amiable a light: whilſt Sir Charles highly applauded her noble conduct, declaring that, bleſſed with a family which was ſuch an invaluable fortune in itſelf, it were covetouſneſs to wiſh for more."

Advertiſements were now inſerted in the London newſpapers for the ſale of Belmont Lodge; and a week had ſcarcely elapſed from their firſt appearance in the Times, Morning Chronicle, &c. before Sir Charles received a very elegant and friendly letter from the Earl of Weſtbury, ſympathizing in his misfortunes, and begging that he would ſtop all farther advertiſements in the papers, as he was reſolved to become the purchaſer of the eſtate, on any terms; ſtating alſo that he had engaged Mr. Mordaunt to tranſact the neceſſary buſineſs, as he knew him to be a man high in the eſteem and good opinion of Sir Charles, who might expect them down early in the enſuing week.

Euphraſia, in the interim, received a letter from Mr. Mortimer, expreſſing a wiſh for her return, if it were not diſſonant to her own inclinations. She accordingly made the neceſſary preparations, though ſhe could not help ſecretly indulging a wiſh that ſome fortunate accident might happen to procraſtinate the journey to Wales, which now had no charms for her; but no ſuch prevention intervened, and on the morning appointed for her departure, ſhe ſtepped into Sir Charles's chariot, which was to convey her home, accompanied by Mr. Belmont on horſeback.

The ſpirits of Anna were greatly depreſſed at this ſeparation, and ſhe now felt the loſs of Lady Belmont with augmented heavineſs; for hitherto ſhe had had a female friend, to whom ſhe could unburthen her mind, and eaſe it of its oppreſſive weight of affliction; but even that melancholy conſolation was now denied her by the deprivation of Euphraſia's ſociety, and ſhe at length found herſelf without a ſingle being of her own ſex, with whom ſhe could converſe, or to whom ſhe could perſonally apply for advice. She had written to Emmeline by her brother Archibald, but had not yet received an anſwer; beſides, ſhe could not find a compenſation in epiſtolary correſpondence for the loſs of a companion, though nevertheleſs ſhe expected the letter from Emmeline with ſome degree of anxious impatience.

Juſt as ſhe and Sir Charles had ſat down to the table, the following evening, to partake of a ſilent ſupper, Mr. Belmont entered; and taking his ſeat at the table, though with very little inclination to eat, as Euphraſia was not there, he informed them that he had left her ſafe at the worthy

Mr. Mortimer's, who manifeſted the greateſt pleaſure at ſeeing her again.

He then put into his ſiſter's hands the expected letter from Emmeline, which ſhe preſerved unopened till ſhe retired to her apartment for the night. But as I am not at liberty to recite thoſe paragraphs that could afford one glimmering ray from the reviving ſun of happineſs to diſſipate the gloom of affliction on her penſive countenance, let my readers ſuppoſe it a mere complimentary epiſtle of condolence, on the recent misfortunes which had arreſted, with a powerful hand, the progreſs of her friend's contented pleaſure. Yet whatever were the contents, they had ſuch a ſoothing quality as to cloſe her eyes in a more peaceful forgetfulneſs than ſhe had enjoyed for many nights laſt paſt, and her dreams were happy, for they were of Archibald Montgomery.——

Punctual to the appointment, Mr. Mordaunt and the Earl of Weſtbury alighted from the carriage of the latter, and entered the Lodge. The feelings of either party were not the moſt enviable at this interview; for each melancholy occurrence that had intervened ſince they had ſeen their friends, reverted back to the imaginations of the family with redoubled force, whilſt ſympathetic pity was expreſſed in the features both of the Earl and Mr. Mordaunt, as, with ſome degree of agitation, they paid their compliments.

After converſing ſome ſhort time on indifferent topics to compoſe their ſpirits, Anna made a pretence to withdraw, and the gentlemen proceeded to buſineſs. The houſe, furniture, and the whole eſtate were then purchaſed by the Earl, who wiſhed only to have it on a mortgage, as he thought it a pity to take it out of the family;—but to this propoſal Sir Charles would not aſſent, as he knew he had not now wherewithal to ſupport a proper appearance; and, giving up the deeds of the eſtate, the agreement was drawn up and ſigned.

Sir Charles then expreſſing a wiſh to retire to ſome genteel village, about a dozen or eighteen miles from the metropolis, Lord Weſtbury told him that he had a houſe then vacant which he thought might ſuit him, ſituated on the banks of the Thames, at Twickenham, and commanding a moſt beautiful proſpect; giving at the ſame time a very inferior deſcription of it, that he might not think it ſuperior to his wiſhes. He gained his point, for Sir Charles inſtantly agreed to become his tenant, ſaying he would ſend up ſome of his ſervants to remove the furniture from Groſvenor-Square. But the Earl told him only to ſend one with him, in whom he could confide; to act as an overſeer, for he would ſee it prepared for his reception. Sir Charles declined giving him ſo much unneceſſary trouble; but the Earl was always obſtinate in a good cauſe, and it was finally agreed that Anthony ſhould accompany him.

He then retained all the old ſervants in their former ſituations; and when Anna returned to the parlour, he propoſed, in as delicate a manner as poſſible, a walk over the grounds before dinner, which was readily complied with. When they entered her favourite receſs, a painful emotion tortured her boſom at the thought of quitting that ſolitude for ever, where ſhe had firſt ſeen, and ſo often thought of the elegant Montgomery; whilſt Lord Weſtbury, ſtruck with admiration at the beauty of the building, and the elegant ſimplicity with which the ground was laid out round it, reſpectfully took her hand, and ſaid—

"The beautiful work of this building proclaims the elegant architect to be Miſs Belmont; and the tendereſt eſteem for the lovely deſigner ſhall ever preſerve it in its preſent ſtate of perfection, which only wants one additional ornament to render it complete."

"What is that, my Lord?" ſaid Anna, with an enquiring eye.

"Oh Miſs Belmont!" ſaid the Earl, "can you, ſo inſenſible to your own merits, ſuppoſe it will have half its preſent charms in the eyes of its diſregarded maſter, unleſs its lovely founder will ſtill generouſly continue its miſtreſs."

"You muſt excuſe me, my Lord," ſaid Anna, withdrawing her hand, "if I decline, for the preſent, converſing on a ſubject ſo diſtreſſing to my feelings."

Perceiving ſhe was hurt by his importunity, he entreated her pardon, promiſing that for the preſent he would ceaſe his ſolicitations. He ſtrictly adhered to his word, behaving to her with the moſt reſpectful attention during the courſe of the following week, when he took leave of the family to return to London, after engaging to meet them at the New York Hotel, on that day three weeks, to conduct them to their new reſidence.

Sir Charles did not ſeem to regret the loſs of fortune, but even gave his orders for the journey, which was to ſeparate him for ever from his paternal ſeat, with an external ſhew of cheerfulneſs. Mr. Belmont would not have felt it, had it not been for the ſake of his Euphraſia, whom he was licenſed to call his at the expiration of two years, as ſhe was now nineteen; but Anna would not have given it one ſerious conſideration had it not been for her father, whom ſhe ſtill mourned for in ſilence; for although he was ſtill poſſeſſed of ſix hundred pounds per annum, (placing out his money at common intereſt), yet that, compared to his former fortune, appeared little better than mere poverty.

When the day arrived on which this once happy family were to bid a laſt adieu to Belmont Lodge, the villagers aſſembled round the gates, and with tears and lamentations expreſſed their ſorrow at this dreadful ſtroke of Fate, which they felt ſo ſeverely, as it deprived them of their generous patrons. Sir Charles and Mr. Belmont were greatly affected at the eſteem their ſincere expreſſions of regret and attachment evinced; whilſt Anna with difficulty pacified the infantile ſorrow of the weeping widows' affectionate children, who clung round her knees, imploring her, in plaintive ſtrains of undiſguiſed ſimplicity, "not to go and leave them for ever!"

As the ſcenes of youth and priſtine happineſs were obſcured from their ſight by the almoſt imperceptible velocity with which they were tranſported from them, they became penſive and melancholy; but the arrow of affliction that wounded the heart of Anna, was barbed by love, and pointed by poignant reflection; for who could tell whether ſhe would ever again ſee Archibald Montgomery? The ſuppoſition that ſhe never might again behold him, baffled every endeavour ſhe made to appear cheerful, and maliciouſly inſtilled the baneful drop of anguiſh in her eye, as ſhe exerted herſelf to aſſume the ſuperficial ſemblance of peace, that ſhe might not increaſe the diſtreſs of her father and brother.

As they drew nearer to the end of their journey, their minds appeared lightened of a very oppreſſive weight, and they aſſumed a greater degree of cheerfulneſs than they had done for ſome time paſt, if I may be allowed the phraſe, in their preſent circumſtances; nor do I conceive that thoſe who have ever experienced the tortures of ſuſpenſe, will conſider it as a phenomenon of a very ſingular appearance. But leſt ſome of my readers ſhould not be able to account for the ſeeming impoſſibility, that they who left the ſeat of happineſs overwhelmed with regret, ſhould gain ſatisfaction as they ſtill proceeded farther from it, let me aſſure them that when we have travelled ſo far on the road of miſery as to preclude every probability of ſoothing hope overtaking us to bid us return, or to arreſt us in our progreſs, we ſhake off ſuſpenſe, who has hitherto loitered by our ſide, unwilling to leave us; and, convinced that there exiſts no other hope of procuring a kinder Fortune but in advancing, we boldly puſh forward, as we know there is no other alternative, in the hope of overtaking her ere Death drops the intervening curtain, and veils her from our ſight.

In the ſame manner did they, as ſoon as they were aſſured that hope held out no flattering proſpect of a return to happineſs, purſue their journey to the New-York Hotel, where, on the morning after their arrival, they were viſited by the Earl of Weſtbury, who paid his compliments with a look of pleaſure, and congratulated them on their ſafe arrival.

They ſhortly after entered Lord Weſtbury's carriage, himſelf conducting Anna, whilſt that of Sir Charles followed, when they commenced their journey to Twickenham with ſome degree of pleaſure; for as the Earl was fortunately in remarkable good ſpirits, he exerted himſelf to the utmoſt to enliven thoſe of his companions, and did not entirely fail in the generous endeavour, for even Sir Charles encouraged him now and then to proceed with a favouring ſmile.

Soon after they had croſſed Richmond-bridge, the carriage ſtopped at the door of an elegant white houſe, which Anna obſerving, ſaid ſhe fancied his Lordſhip's coachman had miſtaken the houſe. With a look expreſſive of intellectual delight he anſwered, with a ſmile, that he had not; when Mr. Belmont, with aſtoniſhment portrayed in his countenance, ſaid—

"Good God! My Lord, have you been at the trouble of tranſporting us from Paradiſe, only to bring us to Elyſium?"

Pretending

Pretending not to hear him, Lord Weſtbury ſtepped from the carriage, and aſſiſted Anna to alight; when, followed by Sir Charles and Mr. Belmont, he entered an elegant dining-room, where Anthony was ready to receive them, and where a dinner was ſoon after ſerved up in the firſt taſte. The Earl then addreſſing Sir Charles, ſaid, with a reſpectful bow—

"If you will give me leave, Sir Charles, I will become your viſiter, and take a dinner with you, after which I ſhall be at your ſervice."

Sir Charles accepted the ſelf-invitation with the ſincereſt pleaſure, and returned his grateful acknowledgments for the polite attention he had ſhewn, in having every thing prepared for their reception with ſo much elegance; whilſt Anna, if her heart had not been ſo entirely engaged by the idea of Montgomery, could at that moment have offered it a willing ſacrifice to him for his tender attentions, which ſhe imputed entirely to his friendſhip for her father, though in fact ſhe was the principal cauſe of them: for as the moon rules the ebbing and flowing of the ſea, ſo did ſhe direct his thoughts, and govern his actions.

After dinner he conducted them over the houſe, which they found very far exceeding the expectations they had formed of it; for it was not only ſubſtantial and capacious, but elegant and modern. It commanded a beautiful and extenſive proſpect of Richmond and the circumjacent country; the garden was well laid out, and in excellent order, extending to the banks of the Thames.

"I hope, my dear Sir," ſaid the affectionate Anna, taking her father's hand as they again entered the houſe, "that within this edifice Happineſs will once more preſide over its inhabitants."

"From me, my Anna," ſaid Sir Charles, ſighing, "ſhe has for ever fled in Lady Belmont! But that content which I am yet capable of enjoying, I truſt I ſhall find in the ſociety of my dear girl."

"Indeed, my worthy friend," ſaid the Earl, as he joined the ſide of Anna, "you muſt regain your former ſpirits; for if Miſs Belmont will give me her permiſſion, I ſhall frequently govern my actions by my inclinations, and make this houſe the extent of my ride."

"My father's friends," replied Anna emphatically, "need no other letter of recommendation to enſure them a favourable reception with his daughter."

"Then," ſaid the Earl, "I will venture to make uſe of the paſſport you have kindly granted me, which, if it be not too minutely inſpected, may at leaſt procure me admiſſion without exciting a ſuſpicion of its being little better than a counterfeit, as friendſhip for your family will prove the ſecond inducement only for my coming hither."

"Take care, my Lord," ſaid Anna gravely; "for thoſe who utter counterfeits, knowing them to be ſo, are eſtimated very little better by the law than thoſe who actually forge them."

"I acknowledge it, Miſs Belmont," replied the Earl; "but as a priſoner is always willing to effect his eſcape from confinement whenever he ſees a convenient opportunity, without reflecting on the dangers to which he expoſes his keeper,—ſo do men very ſeldom conſult the welfare of their conſciences in the purſuit of happineſs; and as mine conſiſts in coming hither, you cannot blame me for making uſe of the licence you have given me, authorizing my free admiſſion, though it may not be abſolutely genuine."

"I fear, my Lord," ſaid Sir Charles, gravely ſmiling, "you are an incorrigible being, paſt all redemption: but to aſſure you of my eſteem, though only held the ſecond in your eſtimation, I ſhall be happy to ſee you in any character you chuſe to aſſume, convinced that your acquaintance will ever do me honour."

His Lordſhip returned the compliment, and took leave of Mr. Belmont, who told him that he might never again have the pleaſure of ſeeing him, as he was going to make the Army his profeſſion as ſoon as he could procure a commiſſion. Surpriſed at this new-formed reſolution, Lord Weſtbury appealed to Anna for the truth of it; who informed him that he had, by dint of entreaty and perſuaſion, obtained the reluctant conſent of Sir Charles to put his ſcheme in execution. The Earl then aſked him indifferently to what part of the world he ſhould like to go; when Mr. Belmont anſwering to the Eaſt Indies, he wiſhed him every ſucceſs, and bowing to the company, left the room; when ſtepping into his carriage, he drew up the glaſſes, and ſet off to return to London.

CHAP. VIII.

HAPPINESS may be found in any ſituation of life, provided the mind will reſtrain the paſſion of ambition, and love of glory, to learn the leſſon of content; which acquirement may be eaſily obtained by accuſtoming ourſelves to caſt our eyes down from thoſe above us on the wheel of Fortune, to compare our own condition to that of innumerable objects of miſery beneath us, who would conſider themſelves in the poſſeſſion of numerous bleſſings, did they but enjoy half of what we regard with an eye of diſcontent, from comparing them to thoſe in ſuperior ſtations.

Diogenes, the famous Grecian philoſopher, diveſted himſelf of every ſuperfluous ornament, and even the neceſſaries of life, and naked, in a ſolitary tub, found that happineſs which we too' often aſſiduouſly, but vainly, endeavour to acquire in the poſſeſſion of temporal dignities, and accumulation of riches. Though Anna thought the ſteps he purſued to gain true happineſs, were not adviſable for mortals to imitate, ſhe was nevertheleſs a great admirer of his hiſtory, as it tended to prove how much it is in a man's own power to be happy, though entirely deſtitute of every gift of Fortune.

Though fallen from her former ſphere of grandeur, ſhe had yet deſcended no farther than mediocrity, and was neceſſarily an object of envy to thouſands who performed the ſeveral functions of life in its inferior ſtations. This recollection recalled content to its former ſituation in her heart, whilſt grief fled from her countenance at its approach, and left only its pleaſing veſtiges of penſive melancholy behind. She now buſied herſelf in regulating the eſtabliſhment of her father's houſehold, and in aſſigning the ſervants their ſeparate provinces, by each of whom ſhe was ſo beloved, that her commands were ever received with cheerfulneſs, and executed with promptitude and pleaſure. An elegant, not a mercenary, economy was conſpicuouſly diſplayed in every department of her juriſdiction; frugality and hoſpitality, though naturally inveterate enemies, were, by her ſuperior management, united, and preſided hand-in-hand at her table;—for the relief of the diſtreſſes of the unfortunate ſhe ſtill preſerved the liberal purſe of humanity; and Sir Charles, who was the conſtant object of her tender care, obſerved, with mental ſatisfaction, his beloved daughter act with equal grace, judgment, and propriety in every character ſhe aſſumed.

They had juſt happily ſettled themſelves conformably to their new mode of living, and the days had juſt begun to glide away on the wings of Content, from each hour being beguiled by its ſtated employment, when a momentary interruption ruffled the calm, by an unexpected parcel which Mr. Belmont received from the Earl of Weſtbury. It was a letter, couched in the moſt elegant terms of ſenſibility, and indited with the true delicacy of the man of feeling, who knowing he is about to confer a favour, betrays that ſenſitive timidity as he tenders it, which evinces the generous fears he entertains of injuring the ſuſceptible feelings of the perſon obliged, by exciting the leaſt ſhadow of a ſuſpicion in his boſom that the acceptation of it will lay him under an obligation. Such then was the letter Mr. Belmont now received, and diſcloſed to Sir Charles and his ſiſter, entreating his acceptance of the encloſed commiſſion of Cornetcy in a Regiment of

Light Dragoons, going to the Eaſt Indies, and a trifle to furniſh the neceſſaries annexed to it, which was no leſs than five hundred pounds in Bank notes. Sir Charles was aſtoniſhed at this proof of noble generoſity, and beſtowed on it the warm commendations of admiration it ſo highly merited, ſaying, he could not conceive how his lovely Anna, who could ſo well diſtinguiſh innate merit in others, could be ſo long inſenſible to the eſtimable deſerts of Lord Weſtbury. Anna was hurt, as this was the firſt hint Sir Charles had expreſſed by words that he wiſhed her to encourage him, and, bluſhing, acknowledged the noble virtues of his ſoul; confeſſing that ſhe frequently withheld the praiſe they might claim as a juſt tribute, from the conſciouſneſs that he demanded a higher price for them than ſhe could poſſibly beſtow.—Sir Charles was ſilent; for though he ſincerely wiſhed her to receive the addreſſes of Lord Weſtbury, that thoſe virtues and accompliſhments might gliſten in an ennobled ſituation, which were now ſhrouded by the veil of comparative obſcurity, yet he was too well acquainted with the tender affection of a father, to compel her, at the riſk of her future happineſs, to accept that man for a huſband who could not win her affections by his genuine worth without calling in the aid of compulſion.

Mr. Belmont ſat up the greater part of the night in writing a long and tender epiſtle to Euphraſia, as he thought he might not again poſſeſs ſo convenient an opportunity of expreſſing, in ſo full a manner, his profeſſions of ſincere and everlaſting attachment; and the next day he took an affecting leave of Sir Charles and Anna, when he repaired to London, to make the neceſſary purchaſes for his new profeſſion, and to bid a laſt farewel to his friends, amongſt whom the Earl of Weſtbury was the moſt conſpicuous character.

Though deeply affected at the departure of her beloved brother, who had entered the Army with no other view than that of attaining, in the nobleſt mart of preferment, a genteel competency for the maintenance of his amiable Euphraſia, Anna was compelled, by filial duty, to exert her ſpirits, in order to preſerve her dejected father's foundering hopes from ſinking to the dark melancholy gulph of deſpondency. She ſaw, with the tendereſt concern, the additional afflictive pain this ſeparation gave him, and eſſayed every art to beguile him of reflection. Sometimes ſhe would make her lute warble in the ſweeteſt undulating ſtrains of plaintive melancholy; and when ſhe perceived that its melodious tones of ſorrow had vibrated on the ſtrings of his ſenſibility, and impearled his eye with the gem of ſympathy, thereby ſoftening thoſe feelings that grief had nearly rendered callous to every other ſentiment, ſhe would endeavour to enliven them by the inſpiring ſounds of mirth and gaiety. In this attempt ſhe ſeldom ſucceeded; for ſorrow ſickens at the ſtrains of joyous, mirth-creating pleaſure, ſo diametrically oppoſite to its own ſenſations, and is capable of receiving ſatisfaction only in liſtening to its own correlative complaints.

When ſhe found the exertions of her ſkill in this ſcience failed in proving a lenitive to heal the poignant anguiſh of the wound of grief, ſhe would lay aſide her lute to read ſome entertaining author, or by her refined converſation ſtill more intereſting, endeavour to illume his countenance with the ſmile of ſerenity, which if ſhe could not effect by converſing on any common topics, ſhe would aſſume a different dreſs, and deſcant with eloquence and equal learning on every extrageneous ſubject. Her attention was never buried in a momentary forgetfulneſs, but was conſtantly watching on the poſt of filial piety to anticipate every wiſh; and her affection ſoon rendered her a ſkilful interpreter of the ſilent language of his heart. This conſtant employment of her mind had at leaſt one good effect, and that was in making her more mentally happy, as in the pious endeavour of ſoothing her father's ſorrows, it caſt a temporary ſhade of oblivion over her own; for ſhe was encouraged to perſevere in her ſtrenuous exertions by flattering Hope, who aſſured her they were ſucceſsful. It is true that Sir Charles, perceiving the unremitting ſolicitude ſhe expreſſed by her conduct for the reſtoration of his happineſs, would not appear guilty of ſo much ingratitude to her tender cares as not to derive ſome benefit from them; and therefore as ſoon as he heard her footſteps approaching, he inſtantly diſguiſed his ſaddened features with the maſk of content, notwithſtanding that at the ſame time corroſive anguiſh was preying on his heart.

In this manner did a fortnight paſs away unnoticed by any ſingular alteration in their minds, or occupations, when Sir Charles received a letter from his ſon, replete with every ſentiment of affection, ſpecifying the elegant manner in which he had been introduced to his Officers by the Earl of Weſtbury, and the flattering marks of politeneſs with which they received him; but more expreſſly particularizing the handſome terms in which the Colonel deſcribed his ſatisfaction at receiving a young man into his regiment, whoſe characteriſtic portrait, delineated by the maſterly hand of his noble friend, the Earl of Weſtbury, had inſpired him with the moſt ſanguine expectations that he ſhould ſhortly ſee him one of the brighteſt ornaments in it; aſſuring him at the ſame time, that his regiment was his greateſt pride, and that he flattered himſelf he would ſeldom find a ſet of young men in the military line of life more generally exempt from the follies, vices, and diſſipations, which were too frequently annexed to it, than thoſe it was his higheſt honour to command.

He then proceeded to ſtate that they were only waiting the favourable opportunity of a fair wind; when, as ſoon it veered about, they ſhould get under weigh for the place of their deſtination, and he ſhould then bid adieu to the white cliffs of his native country, and every object dear to the memory of affection, for the ſpace of a few years; at the expiration of which time, if he then exiſted, he flattered himſelf he ſhould return, with health in his frame, honour in his heart, innocence in his mind, and fortune

tune in his purſe, to ſpend the remainder of his days, with peace and happineſs, in the endearing ſociety of his family and Euphraſia.

This letter imparted that melancholy yet pleaſing conſolation to the boſom of Sir Charles, on which his mind could meditate without any painful emotion, though at the ſame time it was ſcarcely ſenſible of any augmentation to its former ſatisfaction; and for which ſenſation I can furniſh no better compariſon, than that we experience in reflecting on a beloved friend or relation, deceaſed ſome time ſince, whoſe loſs we ſtill regret, but whoſe virtues have left ſuch a pleaſing impreſſion on the memory, meliorated by the hand of Time, as to communicate a kind of penſive ſatisfaction; for though he was grieved at the recollection that his ſon had moſt probably embarked ere this letter reached him, yet his ſorrow was countervailed by the knowledge of the favourable reception he met with from his brother Officers, and the proſpect of ſucceſs it afforded to his wiſhes. ——

The diſtance at which their houſe was ſituated from the metropolis, was no impediment to the frequent viſits of the Earl of Weſtbury, who ſeldom failed to take a ride to Twickenham during the courſe of every week; and although the intention of theſe viſits was only to make enquiries after their healths, to relate any particular intelligence that he had collected about the precincts of St. James's, to take them a preſent of his choiceſt hot-houſe fruits, or merely to pay the compliments of the morning; yet whatever might be his excuſes, or however great his pretended hurry to return, he generally found their ſociety ſo bewitching, and his ſenſes were ſo commonly faſcinated by the magic illuſions of love, that before he had ſat with them an hour, he yielded to the perſuaſions of Sir Charles, and ſuffered his horſes to be led into the ſtable; and theſe viſits, which were never deſigned to exceed an hour or two, were ſeldom terminated till three or four days had elapſed. It is true that Sir Charles ever received him with pleaſure, ſolicited his ſtay with the preſſing energy of eſteem, and regretted his departure; but I doubt whether all his entreaties and reaſonings could have compelled him to ſpend ſo much of his time with him, had not Anna herſelf been there, whoſe attractive charms were ſelf-convincing proofs, and needed not the aid of argumentative logic to induce him to accept the invitation;—for from the firſt moment that he had ſeen her, ſhe had won his admiration, and ſhe now ſo entirely engroſſed his thoughts, that though ſhe had uniformly perſiſted in her aſſurances that ſhe could not repay his attentions with reciprocal affection, he knew not how to diſſolve the chains that enſlaved his reaſon in ſuch enchanting, captivating thraldom; but rather choſe to live in the pleaſing deluſions of hope, ſo long as he thought her heart was not particularly attached to the merits of any ſingular perſon.

Anna herſelf was pleaſed with his company when he refrained from expreſſing any marked particularity in his behaviour towards her, and by her increaſing attention would ſilently repreſent to him, by her actions, the pleaſure he imparted when deſiſting from his importunities; for ſhe ſaw that his ſociety ever operated as a cordial on her father's ſpirits, and that his enlivening converſation frequently had the efficacious powers of diſſipating the dark, prevailing gloom of ſorrow from his brow. Lord Weſtbury plainly ſaw the only motives which made her receive him with the ſmile of ſatisfaction, and with a quick diſcerning eye penetrated to the ſprings of thought that actuated her conduct towards him when he could ſo far prevail on himſelf as to appear in the calm, diſpaſſionate character of a friend; but the very experiment ſhe made to encourage him to perſevere in ſupporting it, till he made it his conſtant practice, ſubverted its own intentions by the amiable intereſting light in which it placed her; for while ſhe conceived that her behaviour was ſilently inciting his reaſon to action, and inſpiring him with confidence to exert it in ſuppreſſing the paſſion he profeſſed for her, it was ſecretly adding fuel to the flame.

But the conſtant ſteady perſeverance with which his Lordſhip perſiſted in raiſing the edifices of hope, notwithſtanding the conſcientious teſtimony of his own mind would frequently breathe ſuſpicions that they would prove the baſeleſs fabrics of his chimerical fancy, he may at leaſt be exculpated from the imputation of obſtinacy by the impartial verdict of an Engliſh Jury, from the evidence I am about to give.

Had he in the leaſt degree ſuſpected that the heart of Anna had been the tenement of love, who carefully guarded it from intruders, and had iſſued one paſſport only to the ſeat of affection, which the ſuperior merits of Montgomery had claimed, he would inſtantly have honourably deſiſted from attempting to plant his image there, nor have encouraged one wiſh to ſuperſede the enviable Archibald. But as this really was not the caſe, and as he might not be, perhaps was not, exempt from that vanity inherent in mankind, which induces them to ſuppoſe it an abſolute impoſſibility for a female to liſten with indifference to the mild perſuaſive eloquence of their oily tongues, which flows with ſuch a ſpecious ſemblance of ſincerity when they wiſh to gain her affections, he thought if he ſtill challenged her heart to ſurrender, ſhe muſt ere long inevitably cede it a willing conqueſt to his unſhaken conſtancy and faithful attachment. Another inducement alſo to his perſevering in his attentions to Anna, muſt at leaſt prove him a man of honour; for as he had declared the tender ſentiments of love for her when ſhe had flouriſhed beneath the influence of proſperity, he would not now that misfortunes had depreſſed her circumſtances, appear to deſert her; but rather, by infuſing a greater reſpect in his aſſiduities, and by a more punctual attendance, evince that Fortune had not biaſſed his judgment when he ſelected her as an object of eſteem.

As a great length of time had now intervened ſince he had ceaſed to importune her on a ſubject that was always uppermoſt in his thoughts, he prolonged his uſual viſit, far exceeding the cuſtomary time, in the hope of finding an opportunity to aſcertain with juſtice, whether he had yet effected any favourable alteration in her ſentiments towards him. She no ſooner ſaw a convenient opportunity preſent itſelf for the introduction of his favourite ſubject, than, divining the employment he would put it to, ſhe apologized for leaving him, pretending ſome employ required her immediate attention. But chance, or rather miſchance, at length afforded him a convenient ſeaſon for the execution of his wiſhes, and at the ſame time maliciouſly deprived her of the means of circumventing it; for he had juſt engaged her one afternoon to play a game of cheſs, when Sir Charles, riſing from his ſeat, entreated the Earl to excuſe him for a ſhort time, and addreſſing Anna, begged ſhe would entertain his noble friend till his return, as he wiſhed to write to her brother, having deferred the promiſed letter longer than affection could even excuſe. Anna could not refrain from indulging a ſecret wiſh that he had deferred it ſtill longer; but as ſhe could not then propoſe any plauſible excuſe to prevent his leaving them, ſhe promiſed to obey his injunctions, and ſat down to play with the Earl.

The firſt and ſecond game went off with tolerable ſucceſs, though his Lordſhip was eventually the loſer; but in the third his pawns quickly fell a ſacrifice to Anna's, and were ſhortly followed by the loſs of his king, queen, biſhops, rooks, knights, and caſtles. Anna could not preſerve her uſual gravity at the confuſion he diſplayed, but ſaid, with a ſmile—

"Indeed, my Lord, you have loſt your honours in a very unſucceſsful cauſe, and reſigned them to your victorious adverſary with leſs regret than moſt men would evince at parting with their temporal dignities; for you have not only loſt your caſtles and orders of knighthood, but even mitres and diadems themſelves you have ſuffered me to diſpoſſeſs you of."

"It is, Miſs Belmont," ſaid the Earl, glad of the opportunity ſhe had afforded him for the opening of the private conference, "becauſe the poſſeſſion of them cannot impart any pleaſurable gratification whilſt you retain my heart in the bewitching bonds of captivity."

"That is an honour to which I will willingly reſign every pretenſion," ſaid Anna gravely; "for although I frankly acknowledge it to be ineſtimable, on account of its intrinſic merit, yet I do aſſure you, my Lord, that to me it would be ſuperfluous."

"A treaſurer may receive a paltry ſum," replied Lord Weſtbury, "without being ſenſible of any increaſe to his immenſe funds; and as Miſs Belmont is the treaſurer of ſo many hearts of ſuperior merit, ſhe may perhaps have overlooked that of the unfortunate Weſtbury, who can poſitively aſſert that ſhe has retained it in her poſſeſſion ever ſince he firſt had the pleaſure of ſeeing her at Brighton."

"If it has paſſed unnoticed," ſaid Anna, "it is a poſitive proof that I have not diſcharged

charged the duties of the office with which you have juſt inveſted me; for ſo far from being inferior, its ſuperior merit would have immediately attracted my attention. But to make ſome reparation for the flagrant injuſtice I have unintentionally committed, I now return it, my Lord, as a debt not lawfully contracted; and beg you will accept my grateful thanks, as the intereſt for the time you have placed it in my hands."

"Oh Miſs Belmont," ſaid the Earl dejectedly, "when I expected to reap ſuch ſolid and permanent advantages from placing it for ever in your hands, will you ungenerouſly blaſt my hopes by returning it with no other recompence than ſimple intereſt?"

"Nay, my Lord," replied Anna, "as you abſolutely compelled me, againſt my inclination, to become your banker, by perſiſting in placing your property in my hands without obtaining my conſent, you ſurely have no well-founded pretenſions to claim more than intereſt, or even that?"

"On my honour," replied Lord Weſtbury energetically, "if the law itſelf could authorize me to demand more on a juſt claim, I could not be ſo great a barbarian as to enforce it by employing compulſive meaſures. But why not nobly lay aſide the dull uniformity of juſtice in the interchange of affections, and by an example of unprecedented generoſity remunerate me for the long loſs of mine by a tender reciprocity? Oh why will not Miſs Belmont accept my hand, my fortune, and a heart replete with the moſt ſincere and the moſt unchangeable affection? But perhaps," added he, with a look of the moſt ſcrutinizing earneſtneſs, "her's is no ſtranger to the pleaſing but painful ſentiment, inſpired by the virtues of a more fortunate and favoured object."

Anna's delicate conſcience revealed in bluſhing characters the ſecret of her heart, and for ſome time ſhe heſitated for a ſuitable reply; but as ſhe had never forfeited her ſincerity, ſhe concluded that ſhe would not tarniſh it by one diſſembling evaſion, and therefore replied—

"I have ever conſidered the Earl of Weſtbury as a man of the moſt untainted honour; and to demonſtrate the unbounded confidence I place in him as a man of that character, I will not heſitate at confiding him with a ſecret to which part of my family has hitherto been a ſtranger; but ingenuouſly confeſs that before I was acquainted with him, my heart was engaged by a prior attachment, no leſs ſincere than it has proved unconquerable, as neither my own endeavours, nor the polite and conſtant aſſiduities of the Earl of Weſtbury, have yet had power to ſubdue it, notwithſtanding it is wholly diſregarded, as the deſerving object, whoſe eminent virtues firſt created it, is ſtill unconſcious of having cauſed it."

His Lordſhip had riſen from his chair, and walked in evident agitation to the window as Anna began to diſcloſe the fatal truth; and, as he had not in the leaſt ſuſpected it, he felt the certain deſtruction to his long anticipated hopes of ultimate ſucceſs, with augmented force. He continued there ſilent and penſive till ſhe had concluded her relation of unwelcome facts; when advancing towards her, he ſeated himſelf in a chair by her ſide, and, with a trembling articulation, ſaid—

"Oh Miſs Belmont, this dreadful certainty is even worſe than death itſelf! I had flattered myſelf——Yet of what avail will it be to ſpecify the ſtores of happineſs I had laid up for future enjoyment, now that you have diſperſed them ſo wide as to preclude every poſſibility of again collecting them? Yet I thank you for your ingenuous candour, notwithſtanding it has diſſipated every promiſed joy; and I will endeavour to prove myſelf the man of honour you have generouſly ſuppoſed me, by taking leave of you. Oh, how painful the cruel taſk!" added he, riſing and pacing the room; when having collected ſome degree of patience, he again returned, and ſaid—"Yes, Miſs Belmont, I will leave you, leave you with every fervent wiſh for your future happineſs,

neſs, and by viſiting the different Counties of England and Wales, endeavour if poſſible to regain my peace of mind; nor will the unfortunate Weſtbury ever again give you uneaſineſs by his unwelcome preſence, unleſs he can ſo far ſubdue himſelf as to view you with the cold Platonic ſentiments of mild affection and eſteem."

"Indeed, my Lord," ſaid Anna, affected at the evident concern manifeſted in his manners and features, "you greatly injure both my feelings and my diſcernment if you can even ſuppoſe that I ever eſtimated your preſence as unwelcome; for in the character of the greateſt friend to our family have I ever deſervedly reſpected you, and am grieved to think that you ſo long perſiſted in ſowing the ſeeds of affection in the cold climate of indifference, where their growth was ſtunted by eſteem; but if that eſteem, my Lord, will be conſidered as an equivalent for your temporary baniſhment, I ſolemnly promiſe it; and there is the hand of ſincerity," added ſhe, gracefully extending it, "to ratify the engagement."

His Lordſhip gratefully preſſed it to his lips, aſſuring her that although it would be a trifling compenſation for the extinction of more flattering hopes, he would welcomely receive it; when Sir Charles entering, the converſation took a different turn, and although the Earl was frequently thoughtful, Anna had the pleaſure of perceiving he endeavoured to conquer his diſappointment.

CHAP. IX.

ONE night's conſideration effected no alteration in the reſolution of the Earl, to try by travelling, and perpetual change of ſcenes, to loſe all tender ideas for the lovely Anna; and he roſe the next morning in the full determination to put part of his plan in execution the ſame day, by taking a long farewel of her and Sir Charles; as to ſubvert a paſſion founded on ſuch fundamental principles of virtue, learning, grace, and beauty, he was convinced would prove an abſolute impoſſibility while her perſonal preſence daily augmented its ſtrength. Purſuant to theſe reſolves, he therefore took leave of Sir Charles ſoon after breakfaſt, on the pretence that preſſing buſineſs required his attendance.

As Anna received the laſt ſalute from him when his carriage drove off, the tears of ſpontaneous ſorrow that ſhe ſhed for his departure clearly demonſtrated the exquiſite mechaniſm of humanity that ſet her tender heart in motion when the moſt trifling materiality touched the tempered ſprings of her ſenſibility. For had ſhe liſtened to his tale of love with mercy, and accepted his petition with an inclination only to accede to his requeſt, he might now have been happy; inſtead of which, ſhe had herſelf been the unwilling cauſe of ſending him into exile: and as ſhe could not probe the wound that ſhe had herſelf inflicted, without being ſenſible of equal, if not ſuperior pangs, ſhe felt the ſincereſt ſorrow at being compelled to ſign the warrant of Juſtice, dooming him to baniſhment for a ſhort time, though ſhe was nevertheleſs ſenſible that the performance of the ſentence was eſſentially neceſſary for the reſtoration of his internal content.

But as pleaſure and pain generally follow as two hoſtile powers at war with each other, ſo was the pain of ſympathy which Anna experienced, quickly ſucceeded by pleaſure, inſpired by the receipt of a letter from Emmeline, the contents of which were as follow :—

TO MISS BELMONT.

" Your laſt intelligence, my dear Miſs Belmont, awakened ſleeping ſorrow in my boſom, and with the ſincereſt affection of unalterable friendſhip I mourned for your paſt afflictions, and your threatened additional misfortune: nay, do not ſtart at this wonderful ſenſibility in your lively friend;

though I muſt entreat you not to again excite it by your melancholy details, but rather beg you will give the troubleſome ſenſation a ſomniferous draught, by ſending a more favourable account to Wales of the declining health of your reſpected father.

"Permit me, then, my dear Miſs Belmont, to recommend hope to lighten care, and mitigate the pain of Love's corroſive wound; for Sir Hugh going out this morning to tranſact a little buſineſs, Gravity and her oppoſite were left to confabulate ſoberly together, when the following converſation took place:—

"When did you laſt receive any intelligence of your amiable friend, Miſs Belmont?" ſaid Gravity.

"Amiable friend!" I repeated, for believe me I was aſtoniſhed at hearing him pronounce this flattering mark of diſtinction; but recollecting myſelf, I replied, "At one quarter, four minutes, and fifty-nine ſeconds paſt ten of the clock on Wedneſday morning laſt, my moral, philoſophical inquiſitor."

"You are very exact in your calculations!" he replied with a ſmile.

"You need not laugh at me," I ſaid, "for you would inſtantly become a ſectary arithmetical, or rather chronological, if you were but acquainted with half of what ſhe ſays of you."—

"Huſh, huſh, my dear Anna, do not declaim againſt my proceedings with your moralizing, for, on my honour, I betrayed your confidence no farther! But even this unpremeditated diſcloſure pleaſed Archibald, and he immediately aſked with the moſt conſummate, I mean modeſt, aſſurance—

"Why will you not, Emmeline, make ſo great a confidant of me as to let me ſee your friend's letters?"

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed, ſtruck with indeſcribable ſurpriſe at this requeſt, "your ſearch after knowledge, my youthful philoſopher, makes you overleap the barriers you formerly ſet up, in the determination that they ſhould circumſcribe your enquiries; for how can you aſk to ſee the letters you know to be penned by the hand of a female, when you have ſo often declared that nothing was to be learned of woman but every ſpecies of vice, fraud, and hypocriſy?"—

"He was evidently not pleaſed with this unwelcome recrimination, yet he endeavoured to laugh it off, by ſaying—

"You were ever a ſaucy girl, Emmeline; but perhaps the ſuperior merits and eminent virtues of your friend may have been the eſſential agents in effecting a ſtrange alteration in my ideas of women."—

"Good Heavens!" I ſaid with the ſincereſt pleaſure at finding a termination to part of my friend's ſorrows, "then you are kindly taking pains at laſt, Archibald, to convince us that your heart is not compoſed of any adamantine particles."

"The event, Emmeline," he replied, with one of his pleaſing ſmiles, "may more clearly demonſtrate the peculiar diſpoſition of its conſtituent parts, and you may very probably be ſurpriſed at finding more ſuſceptibility in the compoſition than you imagined."—

"He then quitted the room, unwilling, I ſuppoſe, to be any farther interrogated on ſuch a delicate ſubject as my valuable correſpondent. But now let me crave your opinion, my ſage monitreſs; and the magical operations of 'your ſuperior merits and eminent virtues,' and tell me if you are not amazed, aſtoniſhed, wonder-ſtruck with extreme ſurpriſe at this philoſophical compilement of erudition, this book, which I muſt confeſs Nature ſeems to have exerted herſelf to bind with the niceſt ſymmetry and proportion, and which exalted Contemplation could not poſſibly have lettered in more legible characters of refined ideas—I ſay, are you, or rather will you not be ſurpriſed at finding this apparent prodigy prove, on examination, a mere volume of human nature, varying only from the generality of homogeneal productions by being expunged from the ſeveral little follies incident to them, and by bearing a better impreſſion?

"Do, for once, my dear Anna, lay aſide your timidity, and frankly ſay—'Yes, I was ſurpriſed, but it was with pleaſure!' And, to ſhew you how highly I eſtimate ſincerity, I will alſo candidly acknowledge that I never thought him an object more worthy of admiration.

"Allow me to ſubſcribe myſelf, my dear Miſs Belmont,

"Your affectionate ſiſter,

"E. MONTGOMERY."

"*Montgomery-Hall*,
July 29."

As Anna read this letter, her boſom experienced a variety of ſenſations. Grief was the firſt, as ſhe too well knew ſhe could not comply with the lively Emmeline's requeſt in ſending a better account of her father, as ſhe was convinced that his conſtitution, far from amending, was rapidly falling a prey to the ruinous incurſions of ſorrow, and ſhe greatly feared it would ſoon fall a victim to deſpair. In the next place, ſhe was really ſorry that Emmeline had divulged her having mentioned her brother in any of her letters; for her delicate ideas, proceeding from a refined imagination, were hurt by the knowledge that the man ſhe eſteemed, and who had hitherto profeſſed no reciprocal attachment, ſhould receive the ſlighteſt intimation, or the moſt oblique hint that he held more than common intereſt in her heart. But a grateful perception of pleaſure was the moſt predominant ſenſation, and quickly overbalanced every other ſentiment; for the evident proof that Montgomery himſelf had given of the conſpicuous rank ſhe held in his eſtimation, appeared to ſoften every anguiſh, and, while poſſeſſed of his eſteem, ſhe thought there was no pain, however ſevere, that it would not enable her to ſupport with fortitude: but the Fates were preparing a trial ſhe little expected time would ſo ſhortly bring forth, that would require the utmoſt exertions to ſupport, notwithſtanding the greatneſs of her exalted ſoul.

Not having had ſo much to divert his painful reflections ſince the departure of the Earl of Weſtbury, Sir Charles's ſpirits had daily become more depreſſed, and a ſmile ſeldom animated thoſe once expreſſive features, which the philanthropic goodneſs of his heart had formerly illumined with the cheerful rays of univerſal benevolence. His countenance was now ſhaded with that ſettled penſive, but placid and ſerene compoſure which generally foretels the annihilation of a life of virtue; and Anna ſhuddered with horror whenever ſhe ventured to look forward to the dreadful abyſs of miſery which threatened to ingulph every hope of felicity in the exiſtence of her only ſurviving parent.

In vain did ſhe now exert every art of ingenuity, and every trial of ſkill, to recal the baniſhed emblem of intellectual ſatisfaction on the ſaddened lineaments of his emaciated face; ſhe perceived, with the moſt heartfelt anguiſh, that thoſe tender aſſiduities, which were never employed without producing the deſired effect, now proved ineffectual, and had no longer their accuſtomed power of imparting happineſs to his breaking heart. She ſaw, with the keeneſt perception of affliction, that ſorrow daily led him onward to the laſt receptacle of mortality.

From his indiſpoſition daily increaſing, her attention and time had been, in conſequence, ſo wholly engaged, that ſhe had not yet had an opportunity to return an anſwer to Emmeline's letter; and a fatal event now occurred which precluded for ſome time the continuance of the correſpondence.

Sir Charles, who had complained of unuſual pains in his head the preceding evening, as he was deſcending the ſtairs to join Anna in the breakfaſt parlour, who had been anxiouſly expecting him, as he had already exceeded the uſual time, was ſeized with a ſimilar but more violent pain, accompanied with a giddineſs; and, turning round, his foot ſlipped, when unable to recover himſelf, he fell to the bottom.

On hearing the fall, Anna ſat for a few moments motionleſs with terror; but, ſhortly collecting that preſence of mind which never deſerted her for any length of time, ſhe roſe from her ſeat, and violently rung the bell, to ſummon the attendants. Fearing the worſt, and ſcarcely able to ſupport her trembling agitated frame, ſhe opened the door, and haſtily proceeded to the ſtairs; but how ſhall I deſcribe the feelings of her tender mind, and paint the anguiſh ſo eminently pictured on her pale diſtracted countenance, at finding her friend, preceptor, guardian, and companion, all combined in the endearing title of a beloved father, ſpeechleſs on the ground where firſt he fell, though not wholly deprived of life. She exerted what little ſtrength ſhe had, and tenderly raiſing his head, ſupported it againſt a boſom aching with the moſt unſpeakable miſery. She viewed with a tearleſs, but agonized eye, the pale features of her only parent, and all the horrors of her friendleſs orphan ſtate ſtood at once expoſed to her tortured imagination. Her gloomy reverie, nearly bordering on diſtraction, was however ſhortly interrupted by the ſervants, who gently raiſing him from the ground, herſelf aſſiſting, carried him to his room.

Whilſt they were putting him to bed, ſhe entered the parlour ſhe had quitted, and walked about with a diſordered ſtep, which plainly ſhewed the perturbation of her mind;—her eyes were ſometimes raiſed to heaven, as if to implore aſſiſtance; but not a ſingle ſyllable could ſhe utter to ſtrengthen the ſilent reflections of her aching heart, till fortunately relieved by the entrance of Anthony, who, with tears in his eyes, and honeſt ſorrow expreſſed in the homely features of ſincerity, told her that he had put his maſter to bed, but that he feared he was more hurt than they imagined.

"Good God!" ſaid the afflicted Anna, burſting into tears, "do not, do not drive me to diſtraction!"

"Heaven knows I would not diſtreſs you if I could help it, my poor young lady!" ſaid Anthony, doubly affected, and wiping away a tear from his own eye; "but as my dear maſter is ſo bad, I thought it moſt likely you would ſend for advice."

"Oh yes, my good Anthony," ſaid Anna, recollecting herſelf, "you muſt ſaddle a horſe immediately, and go to Doctor S——, deſiring his inſtant attendance."

Anthony bowed, and left the room to put the command in execution, which he was not long in effecting, as he was inſpired with affection from a long attachment to his maſter; whilſt Anna in the meantime, after having in ſome meaſure compoſed her ſpirits, retired to the apartment of Sir Charles, anxiouſly waiting the arrival of the phyſician.

Doctor S——, who was perſonally a ſtranger to the Belmont family, having only been recommended to them by the Earl of Weſtbury, as his phyſician, and as a man of the greateſt humanity, as well as known eminence in the medical line, in caſe they ſhould ever require the aid of one, immediately prepared to follow Anthony as ſoon as he had made known the nature of his meſſage, and entered the room where Anna was ſitting by the ſide of Sir Charles, much ſooner than ſhe expected him.

He appeared ſtruck with the majeſtic elegance of her mien, and the dignified expreſſion of ſincere ſorrow that was conſpicuouſly portrayed in her lovely penſive features; and advancing towards her with the greateſt reſpect, he paid his compliments, and ſympathized in her misfortunes. Anna ſtated the particulars of her father's prior illneſs, with the cauſe of the fatal accident which had more immediately been the occaſion of his viſit; ſhe left Anthony to attend him, and deſcended to the parlour.

She was ſitting with her head penſively reclined on her hand, anxiouſly expecting the appearance of Doctor S——, that ſhe might learn his opinion concerning Sir Charles, when Anthony, pale and breathleſs, entered the room, and entreated her to make haſte up ſtairs, for that his maſter had come to himſelf, and wiſhed to ſpeak to her before he died.

Shocked at this ſudden diſcloſure of his imminent danger, and tottering beneath the oppreſſive burthen of ſuch accumulated afflictions, ſhe could ſcarcely command ſufficient ſtrength to enable her to reach the door of his apartment, where ſhe was met by Doctor S——, who begged her to collect her fortitude to ſupport the awful change, aſſuring her that his life could not have been prolonged above a day or two had not this accident happened to ſhorten it. She courteſied in ſilence—it was all ſhe could, for grief had nearly choaked her utterance; and ſuffering him to take her hand, he conducted her to the bed-ſide of her father.

Sinking on her knees, ſhe took his offered hand, and preſſing it to her lips, burſt into a paſſionate flood of tears. Sir Charles was affected, and once or twice eſſayed to ſpeak in vain, but at length ſucceeding, he ſaid, in a feeble trembling voice—

"Misfortunes, my lovely girl, daily aſſail mankind in the various walks of life; but it is the guilty only who fall a ſacrifice to their malignant power;—the virtuous may more probably feel doubly affected from the conſciouſneſs of not deſerving them;

but it is that conſciouſneſs of innate truth and integrity that enables them to ſupport them with fortitude, and to riſe ſuperior to calamities which are incident to all; for although a few diſtinguiſhed mortals may for a time eſcape them, yet they ſeldom fail to overtake them on the more advanced ſtages of their journey—perhaps at the very laſt, when they are juſt encouraging a deluſive hope that they ſhall end it in peace!

"Happy then are the youthful, my Anna, that encounter them on the outſet of life; as they not only have health and reaſon, in the prime of their vigour, to combat them, but it alſo gives them a leſſon of experience, which ſeldom fails to ſerve them eſſentially hereafter: and though ſorrow only darkens the ſcene of pleaſure, conſider it may ſoon diſperſe, and the ſun of happineſs, breaking through the tranſient cloud of adverſity, will, I truſt, ſhortly reflect reſplendent brilliancy on your future proſpects.

"Mourn not then, my affectionate Anna," added he, in broken accents, and taking her hand as ſhe ſtill endeavoured to ſtifle her ſobs; "weep not, my beloved girl, for the loſs of your father; for the humane Doctor S—— has kindly engaged to aſſiſt you in your preſent difficulties."

"Oh Sir," interrupted Anna, "do not, do not talk of dying! What will become of your wretched, your deſerted Anna when left an unprotected orphan, expoſed to the inclemencies of a rigorous and unfeeling world?"

"You have a brother, my dear girl," replied Sir Charles, ſcarcely able to articulate from exceſſive weakneſs, "an honourable one, who will ſhortly return to give you a ſiſter in Miſs Howard; and you will find a ſufficient ſum in my bureau to defray your preſent expences. I have alſo divided the twelve thouſand pounds between you; and nominated him and the Earl of Weſtbury my executors."

He then fell back upon his pillow, and ſhortly cloſed a life of glory! But as I have already painted a ſimilar ſcene, I will not make my readers too melancholy by deſcribing the one which now enſued; ſuffice it to ſay, that the humane Doctor S——, after having ſomewhat contributed to the compoſure of Anna's troubled ſpirits, ſet off for London to unfold the melancholy tale to Lady Gertrude de Montfort, and to make enquiries where he might ſend to her brother, to acquaint him of his delegated commiſſion, and of the neceſſary meaſures he had already taken.

CHAP. X.

THE Earl of Weſtbury had fortunately proceeded no farther than St. Albans, in Hertfordſhire, from whence he was juſt going to ſtep into his carriage to proceed on his route, when the man whom Doctor S—— had ſent expreſs, rode up, and accoſting him, begged to know if he was not the Earl of Weſtbury? Surpriſed at this unuſual ſalutation, the Earl coolly replied in the affirmative, and aſked indifferently what he wanted with him.

"Pleaſe your Honour," ſaid the man, taking the letter from his boſom, "I want nothing of you but a reward for my trouble, and to give you this letter, which may, for aught I know, require ſomething more."

The Earl could not help ſmiling at the fellow's ſaucy bluntneſs; but anxious to ſee the contents of a letter which could be judged of ſufficient importance to be ſent expreſs after him, he ordered him to go and refreſh himſelf till he received his farther orders, when returning himſelf to the room he had juſt quitted, he haſtily broke open the ſeal, and peruſed the intelligence it conveyed, which, from its being ſo wholly unexpected, greatly affected him.

After traverſing the room once or twice, to conſider what was moſt expedient to be done, he called for pen and ink, and wrote a letter to Anna, condoling in her misfortunes with the ſympathy of a ſincere friend, and ſaying that ſhe might ſhortly expect him, accompanied by his ſiſter Lady Gertrude, as he would not venture to injure the delicate ſuſceptibility of her feelings by appearing alone.

He then rang for the meſſenger, who, exceedingly loth to leave his good company, and better cheer, did not make his appearance till he had almoſt worn out his Lordſhip's patience, who gave him the letter, and begged he would uſe the greateſt ſpeed in reaching the place of his deſtination.

As he was meditating on the ſubject of the letter, he caſt his eyes down to the ſtreet, where perceiving a ſmall crowd of ſpectators in high glee, he ſoon diſtinguiſhed the cauſe of their merriment to be the object of his reflections; who quickly mounting his horſe, ſet off in a full gallop, as if determined to outſtrip the wind. This recalled the mourning Anna to his imagination, and upbraiding himſelf for letting ſuch a trifling object ſo occupy his thoughts as to retard him from haſtening to relieve her diſtreſſed ſituation, he quickly proceeded to his carriage, and countermanding the former orders he had given, deſired his poſtillions to return to Lady Gertrude de Montfort's, in Piccadilly; where he arrived at five o'clock, juſt as ſhe was ſitting down to table.

Expecting he would inſtantly return on the receipt of Doctor S——'s intelligence, ſhe had given orders to be denied to all but him; and, agreeably to his preconceived wiſhes, he found her quite alone, and not only happy to ſee him, but willing to accompany him on the morrow to Twickenham; for although her own inclinations influenced her actions in this inſtance, as ſhe greatly admired and pitied the lovely Anna, yet ſhe was ever willing to execute the benevolent offices of humanity, nor ever ſtudied her own convenience in the exerciſe of its Chriſtian duties.

After the Earl had taken his chocolate with Lady Gertrude the following morning,

ing, they ſet off for Twickenham, indulging the generous hope of alleviating Anna's ſorrows by participation, and imparting ſoothing comfort to her aching heart by their friendly converſe and attentions.

Not expecting them ſo early, ſhe was ſitting in her father's ſtudy, attired in the ſimple negligence of ſorrow. A miniature, the ſtriking reſemblance of her loved lamented parent, laid upon the table before her, over which ſhe was juſt inclining her head to conſecrate it with the ſacred ſymbol of filial affection, when ſhe was interrupted by Anthony opening the door, and in a reſpectful tone of voice, as if fearful of intruding on the retirement of ſorrow, announcing Lady Gertrude de Montfort, who immediately followed.

Sorrow, ariſing from any ſenſation of the mind, whether it be from the loſs of an affectionate parent, loſs of fortune, or any other cauſe, is never more affected than when it receives an act of kindneſs from thoſe from whom it had the ſmalleſt expectations. Thus a pecuniary preſent to the unfortunate, ſent by the charitable hand of an unknown votary of humanity, excites the moſt pleaſing, but alſo the moſt painful, ſenſation of gratitude; and the relief it imparts to their diſtreſſes is nearly forgotten in the grateful admiration of the ſecret act of generoſity which thus nobly refuſes the offering of warm acknowledgments, its generous ſelf-denial of praiſe claims as a tributary ſacrifice. On the other hand, when regret for a departed relation or friend is the ſecret anguiſh of the ſoul, there is nothing more flattering, though at the ſame time more affecting to the ſuſceptible feelings of ſorrow, than the appearance of a friend, who willingly forſakes the circles of pleaſure to adminiſter, with the aſſuaſive hand of conſolation, the ſoftening lenitive of pity.

Such then were the feelings of Anna at perceiving Lady Gertrude, who ſhe had no reaſon to expect would have forſaken the poliſhed ſphere of elegant ſociety, where ſhe held ſuch a conſpicuous ſtation, to become a voluntary recluſe, in the hope of ſoothing the agitation of her mind. She roſe from her ſeat, and ſaid—

"Oh Lady Gertrude!——" but too much affected to proceed, ſhe threw herſelf into her chair, and burſt into tears. Lady Gertrude was herſelf too much affected at the ſituation in which ſhe found her, to be able to reply; and walked to the window till Anna was rather more compoſed, when advancing towards her, and taking her hand, ſhe ſaid—

"Come, come, my dear Miſs Belmont, the dark impending clouds of fate that ſhowered down theſe ſevere trials to prove your fortitude, are, I truſt, now paſſed, and left unclouded happineſs in ſtore for you; then reſume your former faſcinating powers of pleaſing, my charming friend, for, ſelf-invited, I intend to become your viſiter."

"Let the diſtreſſing cauſe of my weakneſs plead my apology," ſaid Anna, riſing, and endeavouring to ſmile, "for indeed, Lady Gertrude, I juſtly eſtimate this ſoothing and flattering attention; and to prove my gratitude, I will try, if poſſible, to bury all remembrance of the paſt in oblivion."

"You are a charming young enchantreſs!" ſaid Lady Gertrude, "and appear equally lovely in any character; though I muſt confeſs I like you better in any than that of affliction: but while I am talking, my dear Miſs Belmont, I am probably incurring the general epithet of my ſiſterhood, that of a garrulous old maid! for I forgot I left a friend in the parlour who is equally anxious to be introduced to you."

Anna then begged ſhe would return to the parlour, ſaying, ſhe would immediately follow, after having ſufficiently compoſed her ſpirits; which when ſhe had in ſome degree effected, ſhe quitted the ſtudy to perform her promiſe. On entering the apartment, ſhe obſerved Lord Weſtbury ſtanding with his back towards the door, converſing with Lady Gertrude; but on hearing her enter, he inſtantly turned round, and with great agitation, though he evidently ſtrove to conceal his feelings, he advanced, and reſpectfully bowing, took her hand, and led her to a chair by his ſiſter, ſaying—

"I little expected ſo ſoon to have the pleaſure of again perſonally addreſſing Miſs Belmont; but however great the ſatisfaction her preſence can never fail imparting to her friends, I ſincerely hope that it may never again be excited by ſuch a melancholy event; but if ſhe will accept the tender of eſteem, the loſs ſhe has ſuſtained her friends will endeavour to ſupply by the moſt aſſiduous cares, amongſt whom I truſt ſhe will neither find Lady Gertrude, nor her brother the leaſt ſincere."

"I am convinced I ſhall ever eſtimate their friendſhip at the higheſt price of gratitude," ſaid Anna, pleaſed with the delicate manner in which he expreſſed himſelf; "and the inſtant attention, my Lord, you paid to the advice ſent by your humane phyſician, with the delicate manner in which you avoided giving calumny an opportunity to aim its ſhafts, entitles you to my warmeſt acknowledgments."

"Withhold them, my young friend," ſaid Lady Gertrude, ſmiling, "for your bewitching commendations, excluſive of your grateful thanks, are ſufficiently intoxicating to inſpire any young man with vanity, who drinks repeatedly the inebriating draught; and as Lord Weſtbury's actions frequently ſubject him to imbibe ſtrong potations from the liberal cup of praiſe, you will actually inflate him with the dropſy of ſelf-conceit."

"I hope not, my Lady," replied the Earl, "for of all diſeaſes that is the moſt incurable; as the patient is never aware of his own danger, and conſequently refuſes to take the medicine that Reaſon preſcribes."

"From the knowledge I have of the Earl of Weſtbury," ſaid Anna, as if fearful of ſaying too much, "there is very little reaſon to fear he will ever be infected with this diſeaſe?"

Lord Weſtbury was prevented from making a reply by the entrance of Anthony, who telling Miſs Belmont that dinner was on table, ſhe gracefully roſe from her ſeat, and led the way to the dining-room, where the Earl took the bottom of the table without ceremony, that the vacant ſeat might not awaken painful recollections in her boſom; and as company ſeldom fails, even in the moſt acute caſes, to prove an efficacious antidote to the poiſon of grief, Anna found that ſoothing conſolation in the ſociety of her friends, which her complicated ſorrows had long ſince made her ſo much ſtand in need of.

The next day was buſily employed by the Earl in writing funeral letters to the friends of the Belmont family; and Anna, with mental anguiſh, beheld the ſolemn preparations that were making to convey the pale corpſe of her father to the laſt cold bed allotted to frail mortality. But when, on the ſucceeding morning, the remains were put into the ſable conveyance, which was to ſeparate her for ever from the laſt mouldering tie of filial affection, the wounds of miſery which were yet ſcarcely ſtaunched by the lenitive of time, again burſt open, and the copious ſtreams of acrid ſorrow iſſued forth, which Lady Gertrude kindly endeavoured to reſtrain with the ſtyptics of argument, and the aſſuaſive balm of ſympathetic pity.

The Earl of Weſtbury almoſt immediately entering the apartment, he advanced to Anna, who was ſitting on the ſofa, with her aching head reclined againſt the back of it. She roſe at his approach, when he told her that he had written to her brother, ſtating the particulars of the preceding events, in conſequence of which he was now Sir George Belmont; as alſo of the meaſures he had purſued as one of the executors. She thanked him for ſparing her the painful taſk, and for the reſpectful attention with which he had anticipated her wiſhes; when after expreſſing a hope that ſhe would exert her fortitude to greet him with more cheerful looks on his return, and reſpectfully taking leave of her, and his ſiſter, Lady Gertrude, he ſtepped into the coach and ſix which was waiting, to follow the corpſe to Belmont.

This removal cauſed a vacuum in Anna's heart, which was even equal to that of the deprivation of Sir Charles's exiſtence; for before ſhe had had the melancholy conſolation of mourning over his inanimate frame, or the coffin that encloſed it, but hard neceſſity had now compelled her to reſign the painfully pleaſing duties of even that unenviable office; nor, till this final ſeparation, had ſhe appeared to have loſt him. Like looking through a ſtained glaſs, which reflects every object in the ſame colour, ſo did every perſpective proſpect appear diſmal to her, from the eye of deſpondency with which ſhe regarded it. She beheld the dreary horrors of an orphan ſtate, unprotected by parental tenderneſs from the taunts of inſulting pride, or the licentious preſumption of proſperity, and ſhuddered at the dreadful precipice on which the unrelenting Fates had combined in a confederate league of misfortunes to place her; whilſt every collateral danger attendant on ſuch a ſituation ſtood confeſſed to her gloomy imagination, ſhaded with impervious

vious ſorrow, in their various horrific forms; and ſhe appeared like a ſhipwrecked ſailor, immerſed in a ſea of troubles, unprovided with a compaſs whereby he might be enabled to direct his courſe, or without one friendly hand to preſerve his foundering veſſel from ſinking, in which he had eſcaped the untimely fate of his worthily eſteemed meſſmates, merely to prolong his miſeries. The flowing robes of black melancholy in which ſhe was attired, were not of a darker complexion than the ſaddened features of her mind; and though compelled to exert herſelf to converſe with her friendly viſiter, yet it was with ſuch mournful ſadneſs, and her afflicted feelings were ſo fully expreſſed in the plaintive accents of penſive concern, that to ſee and not miſtake her for Sorrow's ſelf, was the next degree amounting to an abſolute impoſſibility.

For the firſt two or three days Lady Gertrude rather ſought to ſooth her mind, than to force it to any exertions not agreeable to the melancholy tendency of its preſent nature; and would therefore ſelect with nice-judging art the hiſtory of ſome illuſtrious but unfortunate perſonage, from whoſe ſuperior misfortunes ſhe might, by compariſon, regard her own as trifling; and when ſhe had happily ſucceeded in getting her in this favourable diſpoſition, ſhe would with an exquiſite ſemblance of careleſſneſs ſtrengthen her in it, by laying down ſuch propoſitions, from which Anna could not poſſibly fail to draw an illation greatly in favour of her own ſituation.

By this judicious method of treatment, ſhe ſoon had the pleaſure of perceiving the ſombre menacing clouds of ſorrow diſperſe before the collective powers of argument and reaſon; and as carefully as the ingenious ſculptor proceeds in poliſhing every limb, and giving an exquiſite expreſſion to every feature of the marble ſtatue,—ſo did ſhe ſkilfully and gradually proceed in brightening her mind, overcaſt by grief, by firſt removing its oppreſſive ſorrow with the tools of comfort, and afterwards poliſhing its ſuperfices, the countenance, with the external ſhew of content, by the diſcretionary hand of diſcriminating judgment.

Had Anna been left alone to fertilize the ſoil of ſorrow in the contemplative ſhade of retirement, the ſeeds of grief which misfortune had ſowed with a liberal hand, like a pernicious weed, would ſoon have checked the growth of the tender flowers of pleaſure, and from the ſlender ſtalk of happineſs ſhe would never have been able to have gathered the innocent bud of joy free from the deadly night-ſhade: but Lady Gertrude, with the careful aſſiduities of a good gardener, anxious for the growth of his beauteous exotics, tenderly endeavoured to eradicate every appearance of affliction which threatened to overrun the delicate ſprouts of reſignation, promiſing, if not blaſted, to ſpring into the penſive bloſſom of content. The ſecond week ſhe therefore kindly inſiſted upon her walking out whenever the weather would permit; and with the hand of friendſhip ſhe would point out thoſe objects worthy of admiration, which preſent themſelves at all ſeaſons of the year along the beautiful banks of the Thames, to the diſcerning eye of the lover of natural beauty. Anna ſeldom failed to return from theſe recreative excurſions with additional ſatisfaction, notwithſtanding ſhe was at firſt very unwilling to commence them; and, when returned, to cheat the loitering hours of a diſmal afternoon, Lady Gertrude would unlock the ſtores of wit and learning, and with pleaſant tales of good-natured ſatire lead ſober evening on, ere Anna thought the afternoon had paſſed.

As they were ſitting at the table one evening after ſupper, Lady Gertrude began to expreſs her aſtoniſhment that Lord Weſtbury had not yet returned, as the third week ſince his departure was faſt drawing to a concluſion; and propoſed to Anna that after he had ſettled her affairs, ſhe ſhould return, and ſpend ſome time with her in Piccadilly. Seeing ſhe heſitated at giving an immediate aſſent to an offer which was tendered by diſintereſted generoſity, but gueſſing the objections that ſhe was preparing to make, ſhe ſaid, with an arch ſmile—

"Upon my honour, my dear Miſs Belmont, you may accept the propoſals of an invitation without encouraging any groundleſs fears; for I do aſſure you that you ſhall not be ſubject to the importunate proteſtations and petitions of tireſome ſolicitors."

Here ſhe was interrupted by the door being thrown open for no leſs a perſonage than the Earl himſelf, who had but juſt arrived from a fatiguing journey, owing to the bad condition of the roads. Lady Gertrude could not refrain from laughing at this *a-propos* intruſion; whilſt Anna bluſhing, from the fear that ſhe would reveal the ſubject of their converſation, roſe to receive him with a ſlight degree of confuſion; which he obſerving, ſaid—

"I fear, Miſs Belmont, my unexpected appearance can be termed little better than a troubleſome intruſion?"

"By no means, my Lord," ſaid Lady Gertrude, wiſhing to divert his attention from Anna's bluſhing countenance, "for our manifeſt ſurpriſe is occaſioned by pleaſure, as I have juſt been converſing of your Lordſhip, and expreſſing my aſtoniſhment that you did not return."

This dexterous manœuvre afforded Anna an opportunity to recover herſelf; and after Lord Weſtbury had [redacted]en of a ſlight refreſhment, h[redacted]ner that the funeral was conducted with the moſt awful ſolemnity, but that the honeſt ſorrow of the villagers rendered it too intereſting a ſcene to bear recital; and ſhe muſt therefore excuſe him from the painful taſk of entering into a deſcription of the affecting particulars.

"But," continued the Earl, "I muſt not omit mentioning that I was met at Bewdley by Mr. Edwin, the incumbent of Weſtbury, and the brother of Miſs Montgomery, in a mourning coach and ſix; and it is but juſtice to ſay that I never ſaw two young men more affected, particularly Mr. Edwin, who though he poſſeſſes reaſon, the nobleſt faculty of the ſoul, in the moſt eminent degree, was nevertheleſs ſcarcely able to ſupport himſelf during the ſervice."

Though Anna wiſhed to aſk innumerable queſtions, ſhe was too much affected to articulate a ſyllable; but Lady Gertrude, whoſe ſuſpicions were excited by ſeeing the treacherous blood ruſh into her pale face, while ſhe in vain endeavoured to ſuppreſs the riſing ſigh at the mention of Emmeline's brother, aſked with pretended indifference for a deſcription of him, whereby ſhe might be enabled to judge of his merit.

“His perſonal merit, Lady Gertrude,” replied Lord Weſtbury, “is nearer the ſtandard of proportionate elegance than any of my acquaintance, and his features are modelled by the perfect hand of penſive Contemplation.”

“Oh forbear, for Heaven's ſake, my Lord!” interrupted Lady Gertrude, perceiving the evident confuſion of Anna, “I aſked not for a deſcription of his perſonal, but mental qualities.”

“Of thoſe I am a very incompetent judge,” replied Lord Weſtbury, “as the evening we ſupped together was the only one of my acquaintance with him, and our converſation turning upon the virtues of Nature's moſt beautiful performance, his ſentences, like Chilo's*, were very brief, though more expreſſive than volumes could have made them."

This was touching Anna's conſcience in too tender a point, and without knowing what ſhe was about, ſhe poured out a glaſs of wine, but her trembling hand refuſing its aid to carry it to her lips, ſhe ſpilt half of it on the table in the attempt; when Lord Weſtbury caſting his eyes on her bluſhing countenance, conviction flaſhed him in the face, and he plainly perceived that he had been praiſing his rival. He was however too nobly generous to conſider that man as an enemy whoſe ſuperior perfections had enabled him to outſtrip himſelf in the race of courtſhip, where the prize of virtue, ſtamped on the poliſhed plate of beauty with the firſt impreſſion of merit, was to be the eſtimable reward; and turning to Lady Gertrude, he told her that he thought he was the only man who had merit ſufficient to make her Ladyſhip reſign the liberty of a ſingle life, and goodneſs enough to make her forget that ſhe had loſt it.

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* Chilo, of Lacedæmon, one of the Grecian wiſe Men; remarkable for the briefneſs and pithineſs of his ſentences.

Lord Weſtbury never appeared ſo truly amiable in the eyes of Anna, and ſhe regarded him with ſecret admiration for being ſo liberal in the praiſe of his more eſteemed competitor; whilſt Lady Gertrude replied, with an amiable ſmile—

"He muſt then, my Lord, be a ſingular and unprecedented phenomenon of human nature, as in all my reſearches after perfection in your vain glorious ſex, I have not been able to meet with one ſingle being to correſpond with the phantom of my imagination; but as I have ſo long ſupported the character of an old maid without loſing the eſteem of my friends, I will not now reſign it; but leave this paragon of merit to receive his reward from the hands of the more diſcerning."

They ſhortly after retired to their reſpective apartments for the night, and Anna's prayers were not offered up to Heaven untinctured by a wiſh for Montgomery's happineſs; but as I cannot attribute the compoſure which ſhed a ſoft oblivion over her ſenſes to any other cauſe but that of love, I ſhall leave her on the pillow of downy reſt, to which ſhe had long been a ſtranger, with a wiſh that my readers' conſciences, equally unblemiſhed, may entitle them to the ſame undiſturbed repoſe.

CHAP. VIII.

MORE than ever convinced, by the diſcovery he had made of the deſerving object of Anna's eſteem, of the abſolute neceſſity exiſting for him to conquer a paſſion which Hope ungenerouſly refuſed to cheriſh with the moſt imperfect expectation of ſucceſs, Lord Weſtbury began aſſiduouſly to apply himſelf to the ſettling of his buſineſs as executor, that he might leave it in ſuch a ſtate as to enable him to purſue his intention of minutely inveſtigating the natural and artificial beauties of his own country.

But as to change the courſe of a river neceſſarily requires ſome time to accompliſh, ſo did Lord Weſtbury find it would employ a much longer period than he at firſt expected to change the current of affairs into the ſmooth channel in which he wiſhed them to flow unimpeded, that they might not require his conſtant attention;—for the public funds were either too low to ſell out, or too high to purchaſe ſtock, without imminent riſk; and November was far advanced before he received the wiſhed-for intelligence that his buſineſs was in the channel he deſired it.

He then ſettled the houſehold eſtabliſhment agreeably to the wiſhes of Anna, whom he previouſly conſulted before he ventured to make alterations in any individual thing; and the faithful Anthony, who was ſincerely attached to the true intereſt of the family, from his long ſervices and the kind treatment he had always experienced from every amiable member of it, was appointed to act in the capacity of ſteward, and conſequently to be accountable for every expenditure and receipt.

Every thing being now ſettled on the moſt judicious footing, Anna bade adieu to Twickenham, little thinking that the enigmatical book of Fate had deſtined her never again to enter it as its miſtreſs; and at the earneſt ſolicitations of Lady Gertrude, ſhe accompanied her to Piccadilly, agreeing to become her viſiter till her brother returned from the Eaſt Indies. For ſhe did not doubt but that he would inſtantly part with his commiſſion, or otherwiſe procure leave of abſence, on the immediate receipt of a letter ſhe had ſent to him a few days prior to the fatal accident, which had deprived her of a tender father, but which, in the courſe of common computation, could not reach him till the commencement of the month of February. Lord Weſtbury alſo returned to his town reſidence till the rigour of the ſeaſon had ſomewhat abated; when he again intended to purſue his itinerant migrations, for I cannot dignify them with the name of travels.

Lady Gertrude, knowing that repeated conſtrained exertions only tend to enervate the mind depreſſed by ſorrow, conducted Anna, ſoon after her arrival, to an elegant antichamber, contiguous to the apartment ſhe deſigned for her; and told her, ſmiling, that when ſhe could not abſolutely prevail upon herſelf to mingle with either her ſelect or public company, ſhe muſt conſider herſelf at home, and, without obſerving any ceremony for any thing elſe but the gratification of her own wiſhes and inclinations, retire to that room whenever ſhe wiſhed for the ſerenity of ſolitude.

Anna thanked her for this friendly attention, and replied that on her public days for ſeeing company ſhe would without ceremony engage it, until the retrograde motion of time carried the remembrance of her recent misfortunes to a farther diſtance. And it did not long remain unoccupied;

for Lady Gertrude's return was no ſooner known by her acquaintance, than ſhe was inſtantly viſited by the grave, the gay, the learned, and the witty; for her own diſpoſition was ſo truly amiable, that all ranks of ſociety equally reſpected her.

Anna ſoon became habituated to this change of ſcene; and, the perfect miſtreſs of her own time and amuſements, her days, like a ſoft murmuring ſtream, began to glide on in the unruffled and unobſtructed courſe of mental pleaſure. Admiring and admired by Lady Gertrude, ſhe would ſometimes liſten to her faſcinating powers of pleaſantry and perſuaſion, and become the object of admiration in her ſelect ſocieties; where, though the ladies too often regarded her with the contracted eye of envy, the gentlemen univerſally viewed her through very different optics, which generally magnified rather than diminiſhed thoſe ſuperior attractions that rendered her ſo eminently known even in the moſt brilliant aſſemblage of beauties. If Lady Gertrude went out to any rout or maſquerade, &c. where all her rhetorical powers combined had not energy ſufficient to prevail upon Anna to accompany her, ſhe would retire to her apartment, where ſhe never failed to find employment, as ſhe was never leſs alone than when by herſelf; for her virtuous mind was never in better company than when communing with its own thoughts, and ſhrinking back within itſelf, could find that perpetual fund of amuſement which dreſs, pomp, honours and riches cannot produce if not equally well built on the ſubſtantial baſe of a good conſcience.

Though Anna began by degrees to initiate herſelf into all Lady Gertrude's private parties, ſhe very ſeldom met with the Earl of Weſtbury, and ſcarcely ever ſaw him unleſs it was in the morning, when he called to pay his compliments; and then his viſit was generally abridged with the excuſe that he had ſome neceſſary buſineſs to tranſact, or unavoidable engagements to perform. She, however, ſaw through this fineſſe, and ſecretly applauded the rectitude of thoſe motives which induced him to practiſe an innocent diſſimulation; for as its intention was honourable, the means, though unwillingly employed, were certainly commendable.

She was ſitting one afternoon in her own apartment, as Lady Gertrude was dreſſing to receive her company in the evening, when ſhe was interrupted by the entrance of her maid, who delivered her Ladyſhip's compliments, ſaying, ſhe would be glad to ſpeak with her in her dreſſing-room, if not particularly engaged. Anna immediately laid down her pen, as ſhe was writing out ſome muſic for her lute, and proceeded to the dreſſing-room, which when ſhe entered, Lady Gertrude, addreſſing her, ſaid—

"You will excuſe me, my dear Miſs Belmont, taking the liberty of ſending for you; but as my head was in the hands of my hair-dreſſer, it was a moral impoſſibility for me to ſtir from my ſtation even to aſk you a favour, which, like moſt other petitions, I hope you will not be guilty of the deteſtable cruelty to refuſe."

"I believe, my Lady," ſaid Anna, ſmiling, "you may venture to petition, exempt from any fears of being unheard; for you have too many evident proofs not to remain convinced that my diſpoſition is not ſo obdurate but that your influence over it, and your perſuaſive eloquence can mould it to whatever form you wiſh it to aſſume."

"Nay, nay, you need not flatter to put me in the tune of good-humour," replied Lady Gertrude, "for, on my honour, I am perfect harmony and concord, and only beg, to keep me ſo, you will condeſcend, with implicit affability, to grace my rooms to-night with your preſence."—Seeing heſitation hovering in Anna's penſive features, ſhe continued—"I cannot poſitively accept any thing but an indubitable and unconditional affirmative, my lovely ſceptic; for you muſt know that I have but juſt recollected that this is the day on which I was firſt introduced to this terreſtrial paradiſe, and empowered to aſk a favour."

After the uſual congratulations more elegantly expreſſed, Anna replied, that on ſuch an occaſion ſhe would willingly ſacrifice every objection to contribute to her pleaſure, and retired to make the neceſſary alterations in her dreſs, leaving Lady Gertrude delighted at her compliance; for ſo long accuſtomed to her elegant and refined converſation, every amuſement appeared to want ſomething to render it perfectly pleaſing unleſs ſhe was preſent. Lady Gertrude, in fact, had before remembered it was her birth-day, and had, in conſequence, when ſhe ſent her cards as uſual to ſignify that ſhe would be at home, ſent alſo private invitations to a ſelect party of choſen friends to ſupper, though ſhe had deferred imparting the ſecret to Anna, fearing that ſhe would not have been able to have prevailed upon her to appear, had ſhe known that ſhe expected a larger party than uſual.

The elegant ſuite of rooms were thrown open at the cuſtomary time, except the laſt, which was faſtened on the inſide; tables were placed in the firſt and ſecond rooms, but the third was chiefly appropriated for converſation, except a few tables for thoſe who preferred playing at cheſs or backgammon.

Lady Gertrude and Anna then entered the firſt, to wait the arrival of the company; and the former beguiled the intermediate time in portraying, with the livelieſt pencil of deſcription, the leading features in the characters of the moſt diſtinguiſhed perſonages whom ſhe expected. But whilſt they are ſitting in ſocial converſe together on the ſofa, I muſt endeavour to pleaſe the natural love of dreſs in the one ſex, by giving a deſcription of the elegant Anna; who, though ſhe never made it her ſtudy, was nevertheleſs always habited in the becoming robes of grace.

She had intended to change her mourning the following week; but in compliment to Lady Gertrude, ſhe altered it this evening, and was now ſitting on the ſofa liſtening to her witty recitals, attired in a white crape dreſs, over which was a black ſilk net body, and half ſleeves, faſtened in the front with a ſingle diamond; her hair was dreſſed with ſimple elegance, and partly confined by a black ſilk net, interwoven on the left ſide with jet beads, which were drawn up in a cluſter in front, and had a very pretty effect as the rays of light reflected on them; and her black ſatin ſlippers were ornamented with black bugle roſes. Thus ſimply and elegantly dreſſed, ſhe might indeed be miſtaken for Venus, attired by the Graces; and the penſive beauty of her lovely expreſſive features would only tend to confirm the miſtake.

The company now began to arrive very faſt, and titles and honourables were announced in quick ſucceſſion; compliments, like ſhuttlecocks, were wafted from one to the other, though Anna received by far the greater number; and ſome ſhe parried with admirable dexterity, while ſhe reverted others with redoubled elegance.

As the mutual interchange of introductory compliments ſubſided, the company ſat down to the ſeveral tables. The rooms were ſhortly filled, and to a phyſiognomiſt diſplayed a vaſt field for ſpeculation. Though brilliantly illuminated, the luſtre beaming from the various ſconces was eclipſed by the bright aſſemblage of faſhion, fortune, and beauty beneath them; which a gentleman obſerving to the Honourable Lord Seville, who was ſtanding at a little diſtance from Anna, he replied, that he had witneſſed one pair of eyes, which, if not ſo modeſtly concealed with their ſilken fringes, would have totally eclipſed every other.

As Anna never played at cards unleſs complaiſance induced her to liſten to the ſolicitations of importunity to ſupply a vacant hand, ſhe left her ſeat to paſs on to the furthermoſt room, which Lord Seville obſerving, who was himſelf no card-player, advanced, and begged leave to have the honour of conducting her. He was not a little proud of taking ſo much beauty by the hand, for her elegant figure and her graceful motions attracted univerſal admiration; and as they were paſſing through the ſecond room, a gentleman, who was ſeemingly paying great attention to his cards, ſaid—

"Here is Spadille, Manille, Baſto, and

Ponto Seville with the queen of love and beauty."

This quick remark, as he had not appeared to notice them, created a ſmile on every countenance, and one of the party immediately replied—

"I never before, Count Sebaſtian, perceived your quick diſcernment and ready comprehenſion!"

Count Sebaſtian, looking towards Anna, who was leaving the room at the farther end, inſtantly ſaid—

"O take the film, fair Love, from ev'ry eye,
"And Lord Saint John ſhall ſee as clear as I."

This ready impromptu met with deſerved applauſe; but I muſt now leave the witty Count to return to Anna, whom her honourable conductor had led to a ſofa by the ſide of Lady Newnham, and taken the next ſeat himſelf.

Lady Newnham ſoon became ſo intereſted in the converſation of the lovely moraliſt, that ſhe declined playing on purpoſe to enjoy it; and equally pleaſed with her lively and ſenſible companions, Anna expreſſed no wiſh to change her place.

Two gentlemen paſſing her arm in arm, one ſaid, in a low voice—

"If to her ſhare ſome female errors fall,
"Look in her face, and you'll forget them all."

But gueſs her aſtoniſhment, the fluctuations of her eloquent blood, which now ruſhed into her cheeks, then retreating, left them a deadly pale, when on caſting up her eyes, ſhe perceived the elegant, the loved Montgomery in company with the gentleman whoſe ſpeech had attracted her attention, and who had led Montgomery round the rooms to point her out as the moſt beautiful woman in them.

Equally ſurpriſed, Montgomery haſtily let go his companion's arm, and falling back a ſtep or two, ſaid, with an involuntary exclamation of aſtoniſhment, "Miſs Belmont!" but ſuddenly recollecting himſelf, he advanced, and gracefully bowing, ſaid, with evident pleaſure in his animated features—

"I little expected that the viſit I was compelled to pay, by dint of my friend's entreaties, would have afforded me the infinite ſatisfaction of renewing my acquaintance with Miſs Belmont; for if I had known this honour was deſigned me, I ſhould not have ſo reluctantly complied."

Anna was agitated—ſhe trembled—ſhe again turned pale, and a thouſand tumultuous ſenſations ruſhed into her heart, and rendered it too big for utterance. Her memory immediately reverted to the letter of Emmeline, and his former conduct towards herſelf; whilſt fancy comparing them to the pleaſure he now evinced at unexpectedly meeting her, repreſented the picture of Love in colours ſo flattering to her wiſhes, that the involuntary tear of gladneſs ſtarted in her eye, and, trembling, ſtrayed from its ſource, tranſcribing as it fell, in flattering characters of love, the pleaſure his appearance imparted. He conſtrued the beauteous emblem, and in gratitude to its ſignification, placed himſelf by her ſide, and, by turning the converſation on his family, gave her an opportunity to regain her compoſure.

Time now ſhewed his hour-glaſs unobſerved; the hours no longer loitered by the lovely Anna, but fled with ſuch amazing ſwiftneſs that ſhe could ſcarcely name them as they paſſed. When the ſervants approached with refreſhments, the hand of Montgomery preſented the glaſs, and in a voice ſo tender, ſo perſuaſive, he recommended her to taſte it, that every accent ſunk deep in her heart, and remained a perpetual character of united love and eſteem.

As ſoon as the company had departed, and Lady Gertrude entered the third room, where her ſelect friends were aſſembled, amongſt whom ſhe had invited Montgomery, they were agreeably ſurpriſed by the ſtriking up of claronets and French horns in the before-mentioned apartment, which was faſtened on the inſide; and after executing a maſterly performance, the ſound died away, and the doors were thrown open. This unexpected novelty had a moſt pleaſing effect on the ſenſes; for it diſplayed a room, elegantly hung round with feſtoons of flowers, and brilliantly illuminated. A ſupper was prepared with the greateſt taſte. Glaſs and ſilver ſalvers were placed at proper diſtances, and decorated with every ſweet ſmelling ſhrub; whilſt every delicacy which the ſeaſon could produce, was placed in ſilver diſhes, and ornamented with ſprigs of laurel and myrtle. A gentleman and lady took their ſtations in alternate rotation round the table, and Montgomery placed himſelf between Lady Newnham and the unrivalled Anna. The company were no ſooner ſeated than the folding-doors were again cloſed, and the claronets and French horns, immediately entering the adjoining apartment, ſerenaded them the whole time of ſupper, and at intervals till Aurora opened the gates of the Eaſt with her roſy fingers, and proclaimed, by her approach, that it was time to ſeparate.

CHAP. IX.

TO account for the ſudden appearance of Montgomery the preceding evening, it may not be deemed impolitic to ſtate, that for reaſons beſt known to himſelf, as he kept his intentions a profound ſecret, he had come up to London to purchaſe Belmont Lodge, and the landed eſtate annexed to it, of the Earl of Weſtbury, who had expreſſed a wiſh the laſt time he was in company with him, to part with it; but on arriving at his houſe, and learning that he had gone out of town for a day or two, he left his card, and proceeded to Sir William Fitzhenry's.

Here he made frequent enquiries of the lovely Anna; but Sir William, who conſtantly viſited Lady Gertrude on her public nights, perſiſted in pretending ignorance, on purpoſe that he might enjoy the unexpected meeting. He received Lady Gertrude's card, as uſual, accompanied with an invitation to ſupper, with which he was doubly pleaſed; and by urgent entreaty at length compelled Montgomery to go with him to Piccadilly on the following Friday evening.

Lord Seville had juſt led Anna to her ſeat by Lady Newnham, when Sir William entered at the firſt door, and introduced his friend Montgomery to Lady Gertrude; but a table juſt breaking up, he was ſolicited to cut in, and ſeeing Lady Iſabella Gordon, an amiable young lady, with whom he was on the point of marriage, he could not refuſe.

Montgomery then entered into converſation with the Earl of Abbotſbury, who had reſigned his ſeat to Sir William; when the diſcourſe turning upon beauty, they entered into a deep controverſial argumentation on what is generally called ſo, which was ſupported with equal abilities by either party. The Earl maintained that an elegant and exact proportion and ſymmetry of features, joined to a fine complexion, would ſupport the title of beauty throughout the world; whilſt Montgomery differed in opinion, declaring it conſiſted in the eye, and that beauty, viewed with different optics, bore a very different, and ſometimes a very indifferent appearance; and quoted many philoſophical illuſtrations to corroborate his opinion. The Earl of Abbotſbury would not cede the argument, but taking him by the arm, ſaid, if he would give him leave, he would ſhew him ſuch a ſelf-evident demonſtration to confirm his own judgment, that he would very willingly confeſs the fallacy of his. Saying which, he led him to Anna, as I have already ſtated.

Having now accounted for the unexpected appearance of Montgomery, let me aſk the judgment of my readers whether they do not think it very natural that in the preſent happy alteration of his ſentiments, produced by the efficacy of virtue, he ſhould ſeek every opportunity of cultivating his acquaintance with Lady Gertrude,

trude, merely to have the pleaſure of ſeeing and converſing with Anna? If they will not generouſly give it without a retaining fee, I frankly acknowledge I cannot, will not give it, and muſt therefore neceſſarily plead in my own defence; but as I hate making long ſpeeches in public, the only excuſe I ſhall alledge in my own, or rather my client's vindication, is, "Let every man aſk his own conſcience if he would not have acted the ſame in ſimilar circumſtances; and then let him accuſe Montgomery of acting ſelf-intereſtedly, if he can exculpate himſelf."

Indeed he now became the moſt conſtant viſiter of Lady Gertrude, who from having ſuch frequent opportunities of diſcerning his penetrating underſtanding, ſound judgment, and depth of learning, ingenuouſly confeſſed that ſhe no longer wondered at Anna having ſo long and conſtantly refuſed to liſten to the addreſſes of her brother.

She had gone out one morning to perform ſome indiſpenſable engagements, and Anna, not expecting her return till four o'clock, had given orders to be denied, and brought down her muſic and favourite inſtrument to entertain the intermediate time; but her orders, through ſome unaccountable miſtake, were forgotten, and ſhe was ſhortly interrupted in the midſt of an intereſting performance by Mr. Montgomery. She bluſhed at this unlooked-for intruſion, and trembling received his compliments.

Montgomery had long wiſhed for this opportunity to diſcloſe a ſecret of his heart, which had become too oppreſſive to keep it concealed; but now that he had unexpectedly obtained it, he felt ſuch a palpitating emotion in his boſom, that he knew not how to give it vent; and theſe two favoured pupils of Minerva, who could at other times deſcant ſo eloquently on every ſubject, now literally found themſelves at a loſs for language to expreſs the moſt trite and commonplace expreſſions.

A kind of deſultory converſation was kept up for ſome time, till Montgomery, anxious to relieve it, ſaid with a ſigh—

"That lute, Miſs Belmont, I may with juſtice ſay, was the firſt cauſe which began to effect a reformation in my heart; but twice only have I liſtened to its melodious ſtrains, let me therefore venture to ſolicit a third performance?"

Anna immediately took up her inſtrument, which ſhe had placed by her ſide on his firſt entrance, and anxious to oblige, ſaid ſhe would willingly comply if he would take the trouble of ſelecting her any piece to perform. He inſtantly turned to the table, when the firſt title that met his eye was, "Love's diſregarded Votary." Thinking it would at leaſt tend to open the conference, he preſented it to Anna. She ſtarted at the ſight of it, as ſhe knew not it was with this ſelection; and bluſhing deeply, ſaid, with evident confuſion—

"Indeed I—I am ſorry I cannot perform it; for the notes are not at all adapted to the ſtrings of my inſtrument."

Gueſſing, from the confuſion ſhe diſplayed, that it was one of her own compoſition, which was really the caſe; Montgomery became more ſolicitous to hear it; and fearing her refuſal would only tend to excite ſuſpicions of the fact, ſhe prepared to perform it, whilſt he ſat with his eyes intently fixed on her bluſhing face, waiting for the words with more anxious expectation, than many a criminal at the bar of juſtice evinces whilſt waiting to receive his doom in the laconic verdict of the jurors.

She then began the following ſong; and though her voice faltered very much at the commencement, love ſoon made her ſo intereſted a performer, that ſhe finiſhed it with unprecedented harmony and judgment.

SONG.

"How happy was my early morn,
"When ſcenes of life were new!
"When pleaſure's roſe, without a thorn,
"I pluck'd—nor thought of you.

"But ſoon theſe bliſsful days o'ercaſt,
"And I—(I own 'tis true)
"Ere yet my tender years were paſt,
"Had learn'd to think of you.

"Unpity'd now I hear'd the ſigh—
"My peaceful hours all flew;
"The tear of anguiſh dimm'd my eye,
"It fell—and 'twas for you!

"Content and health too fled my breaſt;
"The cauſe I only knew!
"And ſhould have ſunk to peaceful reſt,
"Could I have quitted you.

"Yet you will neither cheriſh hope,
"Nor priſtine joys renew;
"Though with keen anguiſh ſtill I cope,
"And ſecretly love you.

"But when my mould'ring relicks lie
"Enſhrouded from your view,
"Let ſympathy impearl your eye,
"For one who dy'd for you!"

Montgomery was affected at this plaintive tale of truth, and ſecretly determined to chryſtalize "the tear of anguiſh" into the beautiful tranſparency of unadulterated happineſs. He praiſed the exquiſite harmony of her intereſting voice and lute, with which ſhe came more ſolicitous to hear it; and fearing her refuſal would only tend to excite ſuſpicions of the fact, ſhe prepared to perform it, whilſt he ſat with his eyes intently fixed on her bluſhing face, waiting for the words with more anxious expectation, than many a criminal at the bar of juſtice evinces whilſt waiting to receive his doom in the laconic verdict of the jurors.

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"Could I but flatter myſelf that I were the object of inflexibility portrayed by the amiable compoſer, Miſs Belmont, I would ſtill account myſelf a happy man; without which, the gilded cup of bliſs, which has ſo long been offered to my lips by ſanguine Hope, I ſhall find too late to be ſophiſticated with the bitter infuſion of ſempiternal miſery."

Anna's ſenſations at this moment may be more eaſily conceived than deſcribed. The import of this ſingle ſpeech conveyed a tide of rapture to her heart, which flowed in with ſuch impetuoſity as to deſtroy inſtantly every fortification with which Sorrow had entrenched herſelf, and repaid her for whole years of miſery. But as that unaccountable obſtinacy in our nature makes us ever more unwilling to declare our real ſentiments to the object beloved, than to any other, though convinced he more anxiouſly expects them; ſo did the bluſhing Anna ſuppreſs the joyful agitation of her own feelings, and caſting down her eyes, unable to meet his without revealing the ſecret, legibly written in her's, replied with modeſt dignity—

"I muſt candidly acknowledge that till Mr. Montgomery's confeſſion, I entertained too good an opinion of him to ſuppoſe that he would wiſh to be repreſented in any inſtance as a man void of feeling."

"But that heart muſt indeed be a rock of adamant," ſaid Montgomery energetically, who, now that the ice was broke, could plunge into the depth of love, and eject his ſentiments with the uſual profluency of eloquence, "which your voice, your virtues, your ſentiments would not melt into the tendereſt love and pity."

"Compliments," replied Anna, as ſhe ventured to lift her eyes off the ground, and look him in the face, "are too often employed as a ſubterfuge to cover hidden miſchief; and when we receive them from thoſe who have uniformly expreſſed the greateſt antipathy for them, we are the more apt, though often too credulous, to doubt their ſincerity. Can I then believe you ſincere, when I accidentally overheard you reproach woman as the baſeſt and moſt perfidious creature of the univerſe?"

"Indeed you may," replied Montgomery with fervour; "for if this heart has ever employed deception in any ſhape to your ſex, or even my own, may every anguiſh prey upon it!—or more, to make me miſerable, may *you* deſpiſe it!"

Anna could willingly have ceded her heart without any farther altercation; but, determined to try his conſtancy a little longer, ſhe replied—

"Not having been guilty of diſſimulation is in Mr. Montgomery only a negative virtue, ſince he has ever conſidered woman as too contemptible an object to think her affections worth gaining."

"I arrogate not any praiſe on that account," replied Montgomery, "and bluſh at my former illiberality in deeming every female worthleſs, from the ſingle example placed before me, and the obſtinacy with which I maintained my opinion. But your ſupereminent virtues ſoon taught my heart a different leſſon, and convinced me of the pleaſure I was wilfully depriving myſelf of in refuſing to court the ſociety of an earthly angel. Then do not," added he, drawing his chair ſtill cloſer to her's, and taking her hand, "withdraw that heavenly influence which firſt inſpired the moſt honourable paſſion within my boſom that ever gave utterance to words; but benignly cheriſh it with your approving ſmiles, thereby inveſting me with the privilege of claiming this lovely hand as mine, by every ſacred tie of eternal love."

Anna could no longer refuſe to own a reciprocity of affection; but with the conſcious bluſh of happineſs, and downcaſt eyes, replied, in the ſweeteſt ſtrains of love—

"Mr. Montgomery's own merit is too indefinite and acknowledged a ſpecial advantage, not to amply apologize for his demanding as a tributary offering, far more worthy ſacrifices than an humble heart, which has long been voluntarily tendered him, and a willing hand, which has little elſe to offer."

"By Heaven," ſaid Montgomery, delighted at this generous confeſſion, and carrying her hand to his lips, impreſſing it with the ardent kiſs of gratitude, "it is in itſelf a treaſure which diadems could not purchaſe, nor worlds repay."

This happy couple were ſo deeply engaged, that they heard not the arrival of Lady Gertrude; who, entering at this moment, and divining the ſubject of their converſation, ſaid, with a facetious ſmile, as ſhe advanced—

"What mighty ills have not been done by woman!
"Who was't betray'd the Capitol? A woman!
"Who loſt Mark Anthony the world? A woman!
"Who won Montgomery's heart? A woman!

"Your pardon!" added ſhe, ſmiling at Montgomery; "I preſume nought but the tranſcendent brightneſs of an angel's merit could perforate the impenetrable adamant of your's."

"If I adjudge it ſo, my Lady," ſaid Montgomery, ſmiling at her vivacity, "I can boaſt of having the general opinion in my favour."

"Oh I do not doubt," ſaid Lady Gertrude, "but you can find ſufficient evidence to confirm your aſſertion: I, for one, will willingly atteſt the fact. But I believe you have been ſo fervent in your devotions, that you have forgot the charge with which you was entruſted."

Montgomery, ſmiling, owned the juſtice of the accuſation, and immediately preſented Anna with a ſmall packet, which he told her he had received from the Earl of Weſtbury that morning, who intending to leave London on the morrow, had honoured him with the commiſſion, and entreated him to expreſs his ſincereſt wiſhes for her future happineſs, as he declined taking a perſonal leave, to ſpare himſelf the pain of parting with his moſt eſteemed friends.

Anna gracefully received the parcel, not knowing whether to admire moſt the unlimitted confidence which he placed in his friend, or the open and honourable conduct of the Earl himſelf; when Lady Gertrude ſaying there was a letter encloſed for her, Anna begged permiſſion to open it. Montgomery inſtantly roſe, and walked to the window, to prove that he had no curioſity to be made acquainted with its contents; but convinced that the only road to purſue happineſs was the direct track leading from ſuſpicion, Anna opened the packet, which contained only remittances for herſelf; and preſenting the letter addreſſed to her Ladyſhip, ſaid—

"Your brother, Lady Gertrude, is very punctual in his payments, rather chuſing to anticipate the time when they become due, than advance beyond it."

Montgomery ſaw through the motives of this ſpeech, and promiſed himſelf, in the ſociety of ſo virtuous a companion, many unclouded years of uninterrupted felicity; but as he had now protracted his viſit far beyond the uſual time allowed by faſhion, he advanced to take his *congé*. He perceived the cloud of regret overſpread the penſive features of the bluſhing Anna, and could not grieve at the appearance of a ſymptom ſo favourable to his wiſhes, though equally unwilling to part; but Lady Gertrude, compaſſionating their mutual feelings, kindly preſſed, and prevailed upon him to ſpend the remainder of the day; and Anna, beloved and attended by Montgomery, found an antidote for ſorrow, and accounted herſelf the firſt amongſt the happy.

CHAP. X.

COMPLETELY happy in the mutual interchange of affections, every day brought in additional ſtores of bliſs, which accumulating to Anna's felicity, left not a ſingle wiſh ungratified but for her brother's return.

Lady Gertrude was delighted to ſee her amiable young friend regain her cheerfulneſs; and always deriving mental pleaſure herſelf at ſeeing others happy, ſhe gave Montgomery a general invitation to her houſe, telling him, with her ſprightly good humour, that ſhe would daringly ſtand the brunt of calumny to gratify her own wiſhes; for that ſhe had become ſo enamoured of his charming ſociety and converſation, that ſhe could not, in ſpite of her futile attempts to deliver her ſentiments with maiden baſhfulneſs and virgin coyneſs, even bluſh at declaring that he never entered unaccompanied by pleaſure, nor ever departed unattended by regret, and a wiſh that time would not ſteal ſo imperceptibly away. But her bluſhes might eaſily be diſpenſed with, as the truly modeſt Anna reflected them from her conſcious countenance, which ſufficiently eloquent, needed not the aid of an interpreter to decipher its crimſon characters; and it can be no wonder, therefore, that Montgomery readily expounded its meaning, and complied with terms ſo conſonant to his inclinations, with the greateſt willingneſs.

As Lady Gertrude could not encourage the ſmalleſt idea of parting with Anna, whom ſhe knew ſhe could never prevail upon to quit London till her brother returned, ſhe would not expreſs a ſingle wiſh to viſit any of the faſhionable reſorts which are uſually frequented in the ſummer months, but determined to remain contentedly in the metropolis till he made his appearance; and as Montgomery found that place the moſt elegant, the moſt faſhionable, and the moſt enchanting where Anna was preſent, he neither changed, nor wiſhed to change his ſtation.

It may eaſily be imagined that, happy in themſelves, neither amuſements nor converſation were wanting to make their days paſs pleaſantly away, and their evenings were generally ſpent in ſelect parties of poliſhed ſociety, or in viſiting the ſummer Theatre, Ranelagh, Vauxhall, &c. But as courtſhip affords very little novelty in the ſubject of diſcourſe, and to unintereſted by-ſtanders appears nonſenſical and incomprehenſible jargon, ſuffice it to ſay that months elapſed with very little variation, except increaſing love and happineſs, till the middle of July, when Montgomery received a letter from Sir Hugh, expreſſing his aſtoniſhment at not having heard from him for an unuſual length of time, and telling him that he had had a noble viſiter for ſome weeks paſt, but had deferred making him acquainted with it, as he had long ſince expected his return; and that he now wrote to ſay he ſhould be glad of his company as ſoon as he could grant it him, if he were not very particularly engaged.

As ſoon as he had himſelf peruſed it, he viſited Lady Gertrude, and communicated its contents to Anna, who having never conceived the poſſibility of a ſeparation, was conſequently wholly unprepared for this ſudden intelligence, and her depreſſed features very expreſſively declared the pain it was to part. He was mentally pleaſed with every proof which tended to demonſtrate how tenderly he was beloved, and how neceſſary an agent he was to her happineſs, which conſtantly drooped at his departure. He felt diſtreſſed, and tenderly taking leave of Anna, he told her that he ſhould take the earlieſt opportunity of writing, though he ſhould ſhortly hope to again aſſure her of his unalterable affection. He then wiſhed Lady Gertrude a good morning with his accuſtomed elegance, and ſeating himſelf in his carriage, returned home, where finding his ſervants had very expeditiouſly executed his orders in preparing for the journey, he ſoon bade adieu to London, ſecretly determining to return as ſpeedily as poſſible.

A wandering tear ſtrayed from the ſource of regret as his carriage drove from Lady Gertrude's, and roving down the cheek of penſive beauty, ſeemed heſitating whether it ſhould venture to fall to procure a ſofter repoſe. Anna then played the ſong on her lute which had become her favourite, ſince it had firſt proved the introduction to her happineſs; but before ſhe had performed the ſecond ſtanza, her inſtrument became ſo diſſonant, that ſhe could not poſſibly proceed. A book was then referred to for amuſement; but, if well-written, the author wanted argument, and it neceſſarily became too unintereſting to engage her attention:—in truth, her ſpirits were out of tune at this painful ſeparation, and nothing which touched the keys of either her ſenſes or paſſions could make them chime in concord. If ſhe looked round the room, it was unornamented with its moſt honourable decoration, Montgomery! If ſhe met with an ambiguity in reading, it appeared abſolute nonſenſe; for he was not preſent to elucidate its ſignification, nor to call forth its latent meaning with his ſenſible illuſtrations! If ſhe ſwept the ſtrings of harmony with judgment, the produce inevitably proved unmuſical, for he was not preſent to aſcertain its melody with the voice of praiſe. If ſhe employed her pencil, it was an abſurdity to ſuppoſe the piece could be executed with the ſkill of an artiſt in the laying on of the colours; for he was not by her ſide to direct her fancy with his own ſuperior judgment, to throw in the light and ſhade. In ſhort, as an infant, cheriſhed by the tender care of an affectionate mother, may in time perform great atchievements, ſo could ſhe perform every thing with the flattering attentions of the loved Montgomery, but nothing without his encouraging ſmiles; merely becauſe ſhe could not engage in any undertaking with attention, whilſt her ideas were wandering to him to find a home, where on his noble virtues they could ever dwell delighted, nor encourage the moſt remote wiſh to change their reſidence.

Eight, nine, ten days in ſlow ſucceſſion gradually proceeded onward, and ſhe yet heard not the leaſt intelligence of or from the quarter from which ſhe wiſhed to receive it. Eleven, twelve, thirteen lingered on the heavy pinions of diſappointment, and ſeemed a century in the age of love; and the poor poſtman, who ſeldom fails to paſs uncenſured for the faults of others, was mentally accuſed of having forgot what it was to love; indeed with ſome appearance of juſtice, as he was an old man of fourſcore, who little troubled himſelf with reflecting on the thouſand uneaſineſſes a minute's protracted ſtay might effect. On the following morning Lady Gertrude had juſt begun to expreſs her fears to Anna with her uſual vivacity, that Montgomery, like the reſt of his ſex, forgot the object beloved as ſoon as a few hours' travelling tranſported him from her, when the ſervant entering, gave Anna two letters;—the firſt ſhe eagerly broke open, and after caſting her eyes over it, ſhe ſaid with pleaſure—

"Oh my dear Lady Gertrude, congratulate me! for my brother cannot, by this account, be many days' ſail from his native land."

"That I do ſincerely!" ſaid Lady Gertrude, with friendly ſympathy. "But pray, my dear Anna, has he received my brother's letter?"

"He has, my Lady," ſaid Anna with a ſigh half-ſuppreſſed, "and had juſt time to ſend this letter on board previous to the ſhip's ſailing; wherein he ſtates that having made known the diſtreſſing circumſtances of his ſituation, he reſigned his commiſſion, that no ſtigma of cowardice might be affixed to his character; and that he has taken his paſſage in a veſſel, the Captain of which has aſſured him will very ſhortly complete taking in her cargo, and be ready for ſea; and likewiſe informs him, that if not impeded in her voyage by any unforeſeen accident, ſhe will make the deſtined port of England early in the month of Auguſt."

"Which commences to-morrow," interrupted Lady Gertrude, and ſaid, with a ſmile, "But pray, my philoſophic friend, gratify my impatience by unfolding the other epiſtle, which, if I conjecture right, comes from the ancient ſeat of modern elegance, Montgomery Hall!"

"It comes from the lively Emmeline," ſaid Anna, as ſhe broke open the ſeal.

"I wondered at your ſelf-denying patience," ſaid Lady Gertrude ſmiling; "but that expreſſive triſyllable, Emmeline, affords a very explanatory ſolution to the myſtical obſcurity that at firſt appeared ſo inacceſſible to my underſtanding."

Anna then told Lady Gertrude that Emmeline confeſſed ſhe had, with the moſt inceſſant importunities, perſuaded her brother not to write; for Sir Hugh was ſo delighted with the intelligence, he had not before imparted, of having long ſince declared himſelf her admirer, that he begged her to entreat, ſupplicate, and implore that ſhe would, with her kind friend, Lady Gertrude de Montfort, immediately conſent to pay them a viſit; where they would be ſurpriſed to find an eſteemed friend, who looked forward to the meeting with pleaſure. She then concluded by ſaying, that the amiable Euphraſia had received a letter from Sir George Belmont, ſtating that he was preparing to return to England; in conſequence of which, ſhe watched the weathercock with greater anxiety than a merchant when he expects the arrival of his homeward-bound veſſels, freighted with the richeſt bales of merchandize.

Lady Gertrude gladly accepted the invitation, as ſhe wiſhed to be better acquainted with this eſteemed friend, whoſe name was evidently preſerved in preconcerted ſecrecy with the intention of agreeably ſurpriſing them. But as they ſhould not be ſingular in their well-intended deception, ſhe propoſed to deſer proceeding on their journey till Sir George arrived to accompany them; and adviſing Anna to return an anſwer to her friend Emmeline, ſtating that they accepted the invitation, and would ſet out in the purſuit of pleaſure as ſoon as poſſible, cautioning her at the ſame time not to give the leaſt innuendo of the original cauſe for which they procraſtinated putting Sir Hugh's wiſhes in immediate execution,—Anna readily aſſented to practiſe this innocent diſſimulation, and ſitting down to her deſk, ſoon penned a letter, correſpondent to the terms which Lady Gertrude dictated.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

ANNA began to count the hours with anxiety which now parted her and her loved brother, and in the flattering colours of fancy ſhe painted the affecting ſcene of the happy meeting; whilſt imagination foreſtalled the bliſs-imparting hour, when, claſped in affection's cloſe embrace, ſhe could once more recline her head upon the boſom of a dear relation. Beſides, ſhe longed again to have an able counſellor, to whom ſhe might refer for advice, or whoſe judicious opinion would rather ſanction her proceedings; for though ſhe poſſeſſed an amiable and truly eſtimable friend in Lady Gertrude, ſhe was, nevertheleſs, afraid to be implicitly guided by her counſel in matters of delicate importance, fearing that faſhion might have ſomewhat warped her judgment: for as a coin, which has contracted ruſt from ſecluſion, is ſoon brightened by friction—ſo does a female in high life often loſe that refined perception of delicacy, from the frequent rubs of ridicule, and the examples of polite aſſurance to which ſhe is a daily witneſs, which, had ſhe ſtill been ſequeſtered in the ſafeguard of retirement, would have made her ſhrink with terror from thoſe tempting pleaſures which, like quickſands, often ingulph thoſe in the abyſs of deſtruction who are paſſing over them with inconſiderate gaiety.

Four days thus paſſed away in anxious expectation, and on the following morning as Lady Gertrude and Anna were ſitting at the table differently engaged, now and then leaving their employment to diſcloſe ſome new ſentiment or opinion concerning the arrival of Sir George, they were interrupted by the entrance of a ſervant, who told her Ladyſhip that there was a gentleman who wiſhed to ſpeak with her on private buſineſs. Anna's countenance inſtantly changed, and with trembling anxiety ſhe looked

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"I was anxiouſly praying it might prove my brother; but it cannot be, as your Ladyſhip is perfectly well acquainted with him."

"Do not deſpair, my dear Miſs Belmont," replied Lady Gertrude, as ſhe quitted the apartment, "for I ſtill think this *incognito* will prove Sir George Belmont, in no other diſguiſe than careful affection for his ſiſter."

Anna was agitated at this ſuppoſition, and revolving the probability of it in her own mind, inclination prompted her to believe it; and, with her head leaning upon her hand, ſhe endeavoured to compoſe her ſpirits, which were in a tumultuous perturbation, whilſt on the extreme verge of impatience ſhe ſat attending the re-entrance of Lady Gertrude, who was either to confirm her wiſhes paſt all uncertainty, or otherwiſe, fruſtrate them.

Lady Gertrude ſoon after entering, ſaid, with a ſmile, which ſhe in vain endeavoured to conceal—

"It is a gentleman, my dear Miſs Belmont, who has ſome little knowledge of your merit; preſuming on which, he takes the liberty of deſiring me to preſent you with his moſt-reſpectful compliments."

"Oh, where is he?" ſaid the lovely Anna, haſtily riſing, whilſt the rapturous tide of pleaſure ruſhed into her face, and gliſtened in her ſoft blue eyes; "ſay, for Heaven's ſake, Lady Gertrude, where is my dear brother?"

"Why he is in the farther room," ſaid Lady Gertrude, unwilling to keep her longer in ſuſpenſe, "where I left him, that the ſacred meeting of affection might not be profaned by vulgar eyes."

Without paying attention to any thing but juſt the ſubſtance of the ſpeech, Anna haſtily left her preſence, and flying with the ſwiftneſs of Atalanta, ſhe ſhortly entered the room, where he was anxiouſly expecting her; and exclaiming, "Oh my brother!" ſhe ſunk into his arms, and eaſed her full-fraught heart with a plentiful ſhower of tears.

Sir George held her for ſome moments, claſped in a warm embrace, to his affectionate boſom, unable to give utterance to words; for the pleaſure of meeting, and the ſudden reverſion of painful ideas to his mind, tended for a ſhort time to deprive him of the power of ſpeech: but when ſufficiently recovered, he ſaid—

"Oh my Anna! my ſiſter! how can you ſo gladly receive your volatile brother, who could ſo unthinkingly leave you alone to ſtruggle with misfortune?"

"Do not, my dear George," ſaid Anna, "undeſervedly blame yourſelf, for your ſeparation was actuated by the moſt honourable motives; and though your expectations have proved unſucceſsful, you have this conſolation, that it is not your conduct that has rendered them unpropitious, but the unrelenting deſtiny that has till lately obſcured our proſpects, and blighted every plant of hope which our ſanguine fancies ſet in the ſhade of adverſity, flattering ourſelves a ſummer's ſun would penetrate the ſombre gloom to cheriſh them."

"Do they begin to brighten then?" ſaid Sir George.

"Mine do," ſaid Anna, with a ſweet ſmile, "ſince I am again bleſſed in the ſociety of an affectionate brother, and poſſeſs the love of Archibald Montgomery."

"Montgomery love you!" ſaid her delighted brother; "then for this ſingle inſtance of kindneſs to my lovely ſiſter I will abſolve the Fates to come!"

The gem of gratitude ſat enſhrined in Anna's eye at this infinite proof of affection, unwilling to leave the mine from whence it firſt derived, and from which it retained its luſtre. Sir George then enquired after his Euphraſia; when Anna giving him

Emmeline's letter in anſwer to his queſtion, he peruſed the contents with ineffable delight, and agreed to accompany them with the greateſt pleaſure.

They then returned to Lady Gertrude, who, after congratulating them on the happy meeting, aſked Sir George when he arrived in England. He replied, that after a very proſperous voyage, he landed at Portſmouth the preceding morning, where he immediately took a poſt-chaiſe, accompanied by his faithful Tomlins, and travelling without intermiſſion, except to change horſes, he ſtopped at the gates at their houſe at Twickenham a little after midnight.

"I perceived that darkneſs and repoſe reigned throughout the building," he continued; "but too anxious to ſtand upon ceremony, I ordered Tomlins to ring at the bell. This was three times repeated without effect. Out of patience, and beginning to fear I knew not what, I commanded him to repeat it with redoubled violence; and ſomebody ſpeaking from an upper window immediately removed my fears:

for a loud—"Who's there?" proclaimed it to be old Anthony's voice. He knew not mine again, for on eagerly enquiring if Miſs Belmont was at home, a ſimple negative was my reply; and he coolly demanded my buſineſs.

"Buſineſs!" re-echoed Tomlins, "where are your ſenſes, my old friend, that you cannot ſee it is a night's lodging?"

"Without receiving any anſwer to this ſalutation, the door was almoſt inſtantly opened."—

After dinner a ſervant was diſpatched to Twickenham with a letter from Sir George Belmont, deſiring Tomlins to pack up the neceſſary articles for a journey to Wales, and to repair with them to Lady Gertrude's the ſame evening; for they had readily aſſented to a propoſition ſhe had made of ſetting out the next day, that from their long delay the penetrating Emmeline might not divine the cauſe of it.

As Lady Gertrude knew that the ſwifteſt courſers would not outſtrip the wiſhes of her companions, ſhe declined travelling with her own horſes; but proceeding poſt early the next morning, accompanied by their attendants, this happy trio bade adieu to the metropolis to ſeek for Happineſs in the manſion of Plenty, where Love preſided to make every heart in joyful meaſures beat in uniſon divine.

It had been one of thoſe beautiful days, in the middle of the month of Auguſt, when Heaven appears to ſmile benign on the luxuriant produce of the earth, and Nature, in every creature, to rejoice for the various bleſſings an abundant harveſt yields, and which exalts the ſoul of the traveller to that high degree of gratitude, that whilſt he ſeems to hold ſilent converſe with his Maker, as he views, with an expanded heart and eye, the ſtores of plenty he has ſo beneficently given, he feels that heavenly ſenſation which can compare to nothing but a foretaſte of that bliſs, deſigned as an infinite reward for the virtuous in a more perfect ſtate.

Evening was now beginning her empire over the world, and blazing Day, ſatiated with admiration, ſunk into peaceful ſlumber

ber on the bluſhing boſom of the weſtern ſky, whilſt gentle zephyrs fanned him to repoſe.

Our travellers were now juſt emerging from the town of Montgomery, to purſue the road to Montgomery Hall, ſituated in a valley, equally beautiful with the famous Tempe, in Theſſaly. Their hearts beat high with expectant happineſs; language became too limitted to deſcribe their feelings;—converſation faltered on the tongue of Love and Hope, and trembling as it fell, Lady Gertrude was contented to remain in ſilence. The moon had juſt riſen to liſten to the melodious ſtrains of the plaintive nightingale, chanting her oraiſons among the branches of a neighbouring foreſt; but, enamoured of its own beams, which the chryſtal ſtream reflected as it ran gurgling down the road-ſide, majeſtically purſued its courſe; while, loſt in admiration of the ſurrounding beauties, Zephyr forgot to whiſper amidſt the verdant foliage.

The chimnies were now clearly diſtinguiſhed, when a conſultation being held, Sir George pulled the check-ſtring, and ordered the drivers to ſtop at the ſervants' gate. Anna's heart beat in tumultuous agitation againſt her ſide, as if too ſmall to contain its pleaſure—it wanted to find ſome place to vent itſelf ere it could ſink to compoſure; but Sir George's beat with different ſenſations, for he hoped, but feared his loved Euphraſia would not be there.

The carriage now ſtopped, and a gentle ring at the bell ſoon ſummoned an attendant, who, ſurpriſed at ſeeing ſuch an elegant equipage, was going to order the poſtillions to proceed to the other door, till Sir George, addreſſing him by his name, told him that they wiſhed their arrival to be kept a ſecret, and aſked him if the family were alone. The man inſtantly recognizing him, told him they were; for that Miſs Howard had juſt walked into his favourite little wood.

Delighted at this intelligence, Sir George haſtily alighted, and aſſiſting Lady Gertrude and his lovely trembling ſiſter from the carriage, he propoſed that they ſhould follow the ſervant to the parlour, but not diſcloſe his being with them till he entered with Euphraſia. To this they readily aſſented, and Anna, taking the arm of Lady Gertrude, followed the ſervant in ſilence. But as I cannot paint, at the ſame time, two different pictures, I ſhall for once crave permiſſion to follow the tendency of my own inclinations, which, though nearly equiponderate, weigh down the balance in favour of Sir George Belmont.

After delivering the neceſſary orders to the ſervants, he walked to the little copſe with a palpitating heart; and entering by a well-known path, he proceeded with the greateſt caution towards the interior, to aſcertain whether Euphraſia ſtill thought of him in ſolitude. He ſaw her ſeated on the graſs bank, where firſt he told the tender tale of love; and the murmuring ſtream whereby he vowed eternal conſtancy, was ſoftly flowing at her feet;—the little dog too, which he had preſented her at parting, he ſaw, with infinite ſatisfaction, repoſing by her ſide. She ſighed! and the faithful animal, as if actuated by a ſecret impulſe for his maſter, leaped with its two fore feet upon her knees; but with what tranſport did he ſee her fondly pat it on the head, and ſay, "Ah, Fidelle! how often can you witneſs that I have never looked on you without thinking of your loved maſter, nor ſpoke to you without expreſſing a wiſh for his return." He was juſt going to ſtep from his concealment, to reveal himſelf, when ſhe began—

"For tenderneſs form'd, &c."

with ſo ſweet a voice, that every other ſenſe was abſorbed in that of hearing. The words being analogous to her own ſituation, ſhe ſung it with exquiſite feeling, and the gentle breeze which now ſprang up, tranſported the melodious ſtrains through the calm ſerenity of the evening. The nightingale, charmed with liſtening to complaints ſo ſynonimous to its own, left its peaceful retreat, and perching in the tree above her head, joined its plaintive notes to her's, and rendered the harmony complete.

As ſoon as ſhe had concluded, ſhe roſe from her ſeat, and addreſſing the plaintive minſtrel, ſaid—

"Sweet bird, could ſympathy act ſo powerfully in the human breaſt, I ſhould not now be left to pine in ſolitude!" When, taking Belmont's picture from her boſom, and preſſing it to her lips, ſhe ſaid, "So tenderly beloved, why would the dear original ever leave me? Could the wealth of rich Peru compenſate for the anguiſh of this long abſence? No, Belmont, dear Belmont, you for once miſtook the way to give me pleaſure. Though poor, or in miſery, direct him, ye heavenly Powers, to his faithful Euphraſia, and this undiſguiſed and conſtant heart ſhall receive him a welcome tenant, nor think it poſſible for honours, titles, or all the wealth that Fortune ever loads on fools, to occupy it better."

"Take me then, you generous angel!" ſaid the enraptured Sir George, haſtily advancing from his concealment, "take me, the ſame unalterable being as when I left you!"

Euphraſia heard the well-known harmonious voice. The moon ſhone on the identical figure of that being ſhe had been invoking. Overcome by ſo ſudden and unexpected, though ſo intereſting a viſiter, ſhe ſunk ſenſeleſs at his feet; when gently raiſing her up, nearly expiring under the moſt dreadful ideas, he was in a few moments happily relieved by an apparent return of that life, to him ten thouſand times more coveted than his own; and in raptures impreſſed a congratulating kiſs upon her pallid cheek, as the other reclined upon his ſhoulder, which Platoniſts may reprehend. It is true, Sir George Belmont was no ſectary of that ſecluded party; yet it was a kiſs of adoration, ſanctioned by the ſincerity of true and ſacred friendſhip, the tender intereſt of eſteem, and the ardency of pure and honourable affection. Euphraſia now opening her eyes, fixed them on his, and with a look of exquiſite ſweetneſs, articulated in ſoft and tremulous accents—

"Oh Sir George! how, where, when were you tranſported hither?"

He then related the particulars; when, on hearing that Anna was in the parlour, ſhe ſaid ſhe would return; but as he took care not to conduct her in haſte, there was ſufficient time to enumerate many tender proteſtations, and to repeat many intereſting ſpeeches with the eloquence of a Cicero or Demoſthenes.

But as all my readers are not poſſeſſed of this delicate ſenſibility, and as they who are can moſt probably recite love-ſpeeches in a purer ſtrain of ſweet-flowing ſentiment, I ſhall leave Sir George's ſacred to the ear of Love alone; whilſt the little Fidelle friſking round them, ſeemed to expreſs by his ſportive gambols, that he participated in the happineſs of both.

The candles were placed on a table at the farther end of the room, whilſt in the circle of happineſs, enraptured with a ſoft delirium of mental pleaſure, ſat the lovely Anna, and the deſerving and elegant Montgomery; the lively Emmeline, and her proſeſſed feſſed admirer, the Earl of Weſtbury; the delighted Sir Hugh, who ſat rubbing his hands, unequal to the taſk of deſcribing his indefinable ſatisfaction; and the amiable Lady Gertrude, who taſted the beverage of joy, becauſe ſhe ſaw others happy; though nothing could have made it ſo palatable to the taſte of affection, as finding her brother ſo unexpectedly in attendance upon Emmeline.

In this manner were they ſitting, when the door opening attracted their attention; but to define the joy, aſtoniſhment, and pleaſant ſurpriſe which ſtruggled for maſtery in every feature but Lady Gertrude's and Anna's, is impoſſible. Sir Hugh ſat motionleſs, as if ranſacking every hidden ſtore of imagination to account for the ſingularity of this phenomenon; for when he had enquired after him of Anna, ſhe ſaid, with truth, that ſhe did not know when ſhe might expect him. The lively Emmeline was the firſt who broke the ſpell-bound ſilence, exclaiming—

"Good Heavens! wafted by the proſperous gales of Fortune, the tall rich ſhip from India's pearly ſhore has ſailed into the Engliſh Channel, and brought with it a prize, laden with the ineſtimable jewels of affection."

Euphraſia ſmiled at her friend's vivacity, and advanced to compliment Anna and Lady Gertrude; whilſt congratulations, flowing on the rapturous tide of pleaſure, poured upon Sir George with expreſſive eloquence, more particularly from Sir Hugh, who, after deſcribing his joy in a variety of characters, declared that nothing on earth could now increaſe his felicity till he had the honour of being addreſſed by the title of grandfather in the liſping accents of prattling infancy.

Anna and Euphraſia were in too deep converſe together for either to hear this concluſive ſentence; and a ſervant coming in at the time, to let Miſs Montgomery know that ſupper was on table, afforded her an exquiſite pretence for not liſtening to it. She then led the way into the adjoining apartment, where ſhe was followed by the remainder of the company.

CHAP. XII.

IT has been frequently obſerved by thoſe who have made human nature their ſtudy, tracing, with the moſt minute inſpection, the ſource from whence each varying paſſion of the fickle mind derives its power, and cloſely purſuing its retroceding courſe till it ſinks into its firſt principles, that a woman will dreſs to gain the affections of the object ſhe prefers, though after the Gordian knot is once tied in the intricate bonds of matrimony, and ſhe knows that no earthly power can diſunite it, unleſs the law, like Alexander's ſword, cuts it in twain, ſhe too frequently neglects thoſe little arts which are even neceſſary to keep the inconſtant flame of affection alive, and which moſt probably were the only cauſe which kindled it, by dropping the vivifying ſpark of love into the embers of eſteem, that, like combuſtibles, often take fire from a cauſe, which, conſidered in itſelf, appears very inſignificant.

But man, all-potent man, ſtands acquitted of theſe grievous charges; or rather, unjuſtly unaccuſed. For, ever the ſtedfaſt advocate of his own ſex, theſe follies, I may ſay faults, have not yet been owned to exiſt, merely becauſe no optical inſtrument has been ſufficiently free from ſelf-prejudice to diſcern them; but ſleeping in the ſecurity of partiality, Juſtice has hitherto been afraid to awake them into being, for whenever ſhe has made the weak attempt, trembling with pride ſhe has heſitated, and finally averting her face, reſolved to leave them ſtill uncriticized.

They will, no doubt, ſtand forth in their own juſtification, and ſay, that as their thoughts and time are employed in amaſſing affluence to make the female happy, ſhe ought, in gratitude, to repay their cares by kindly complying with their juſtifiable requeſts, and a tender attention to their wiſhes.

Letting the fact ſtand as I have ſtated it, I implicitly allow the cogency of the affirmation. But woman in general is often unjuſtly cenſured in theſe particulars; as, from being denied the advantages of an equal education, ſhe cannot conſequently recriminate with the characteriſtic argument of her accuſers, who therefore tax her with all her little follies, whilſt, unreproved, they triumph in their own.

Ever fond of novelty, man's unlimitted wiſhes too often lead him from home in purſuit of pleaſure; and when he returns, he attempts to palliate his fault by ſaying, "How can I expect to find pleaſure in your ſociety, when inſtead of greeting me with ſmiles, your features convey a ſilent reproach?" The next time he returns, ſhe endeavours to welcome him with a ſmile; but her aching heart proclaims it to be ſuperficial, and the painful effort dims her eye with anguiſh.—His conſcience now ſmites him; but inſtead of trying to remove the cauſe, he only eſſays to ſtifle her friendly admonitions in more unbounded pleaſures; and yet the pernicious effects are imputed to the conduct of the mentally wretched female.

But yet I muſt ingenuouſly confeſs that the complaint of domeſtic infelicity would more often find a remedy if the female would but perſevere in receiving him with welcome gladneſs, and by perpetual neatneſs and cheerfulneſs, ſtrive to make his own fire-ſide the happieſt. For though for awhile infatuated with the bewitching ſuperfices of interdicted pleaſures, he would ſoon perceive that the enjoyment of them left no reliſh for reflection; when returning home for change of ſcene, and finding Happineſs preſided, he would ſhortly confeſs himſelf a contrite penitent; and received with approving ſmiles to the affectionate heart, inſtead of harſh invectives, he would gratefully leave his image there a reſidentiary, till becoming intimate with its modeſt worth, he would wonder how he could have been ſo long blind to its merit.

Anna alſo knew that negligence of dreſs, if rendered an habitual practice, loſes the perſon ſo attired that reſpect, which it is abſolutely eſſential to preſerve. She therefore determined, though always ſimply elegant, and delicately neat, to exceed if poſſible her preſent nicety after ſhe had once changed her name; but whether ſhe was trying to effect an alteration before the time, I know not, though I am poſitive that ſhe had never before ſtudied her toilet with half the care ſhe did the next morning, till interrupted by the lively Emmeline. Anna addreſſing her as ſhe entered, ſaid, with an intelligent ſmile—

"I preſume I have the honour of wiſhing a good morning to the deſtined Counteſs of Weſtbury?"

"Upon my honour, my ſage propheteſs," replied Emmeline, ſmiling as ſhe took a chair by the table, "you only have the power of conferring the honourable title. But, good Heavens! do your eyes tell the tale of truth, when they proclaim that you have riſen thus early with no other intent than to put awaking day out of countenance?"

"Bluſhing at the flattering voice of praiſe, though even from a female friend, ſhe replied, as ſhe looked in her face with an expreſſion of ineffable ſweetneſs—

"If you mean the favoured friend of Fortune, whoſe merit had the infinite power of making your roving ideas concentrate in love, I aſſure you they falſify their intentions. But pray inform me by what authority I am inveſted with the power of placing you in the rank I wiſh to ſee you; for if I find myſelf officially inaugurated, the firſt proof of my influence will be, to paſs an act for the completion of my friend's happineſs."

"I thank you," replied Emmeline archly, "but I doubt whether you would have had fortitude enough to withſtand the combined forces of Eloquence and Perſuaſion, as you may expect that the noble Weſtbury will be urgent with Archibald to ſolicit you to name the wedding-day; for yeſterday petitioning me, in that common cant phraſe, to make him happy, by appointing an early day on which he might be licenſed to call me his for ever, I frankly referred him to my brother, declaring that I was ſo ſelfiſhly inclined, that, not contented at receiving Honour and Merit for a huſband, I muſt alſo receive Virtue and Elegance for a ſiſter the ſame day, perſonified by Miſs Belmont. Now do not, my ſentimental friend, ſummon that treacherous conſcience into your face, for you cannot confer a greater favour than by naming a diſtant one; for, as I intend to be a very ſubmiſſive wife, I wiſh to enjoy the liberty of a ſingle life a little longer, before I willingly jump into the nooſe that is ſet for me; when, like a bird reſtrained by a chain, I muſt flutter about for the diverſion of my maſter."

"I admire your doctrines," ſaid Anna, ſmiling at her vivacity, "but it will be a long time before you have any occaſion to practiſe them, for I feel too fearful of undertaking the various and numerous duties a married life impoſes, to name an early day for their commencement. But pray, my dear Miſs Montgomery, tell me from whence you date the beginning of your happineſs; for to me it ſtill appears a paradox?"

"Oh this honourable perſonage made his triumphal entry the latter end of May," replied Emmeline, "and told Sir Hugh, that having met with a diſappointment, he had ſet out with the intention of making the tour of England; but preferring the pleaſures of ſociety, he had come to regain his ſpirits in his company. He had not been with us a fortnight before Sir Hugh, going out one morning upon buſineſs, left us alone, when he employed the time in telling me a long ſtory of a certain young lady who had wounded his vanity, his heart I mean, in refuſing the tender of his love; but gueſs my amazement at finding this was merely recited to intereſt my feelings with pity, that I might accede to his propoſals of becoming his phyſician, by accepting the ſlighted offer. A fly, you know, my dear moraliſt, is generally caught in the glittering temptation; ſo without any circumlocution I referred him to Sir Hugh, telling him, with a little heſitation in my pronunciation, that as I was a dutiful daughter, I ſhould ſtill be governed by his determination, which, if it proved agreeable to his wiſhes, might probably be more conſonant to mine."

"Very modeſtly confeſſed!" ſaid Anna, ſmiling as ſhe deſcended with her friend to the breakfaſt parlour, where they were ſurpriſed at finding the company attending the appearance of the Lady Preſident.

Soon after breakfaſt, Montgomery aſked Sir George to take a walk; when the company purſuing thoſe occupations that were moſt agreeable to their inclinations, Anna withdrew to the ſtudy, and ſelecting a volume from the library, ſat down on the ſofa to peruſe it.

She had ſat about an hour, and was deeply engaged with its contents, when her attention was called off by the opening of the glaſs door, which led into the long walk of elms, mentioned in a former part of this hiſtory, and the entrance of Montgomery. Recalling the converſation ſhe had with Emmeline in the former part of the morning, ſhe wiſhed that ſhe could have avoided this meeting; but he left her no time to frame an excuſe, which was indeed an art that ſhe was wholly unſkilled in, for immediately advancing, he took a ſeat by her ſide, ſaying—

"Fortune indeed ſmiles on me this morning; and could I hope Miſs Belmont would kindly ſuffer Merit to be equally propitious, I might juſtly eſtimate myſelf the moſt enviable of mankind."

"Indeed," ſaid Anna, modeſtly concealing the ſoft radiancy of her eyes by directing them on the book, the leaves of which ſhe was careleſſly turning over, "I conceive that Mr. Montgomery is already that enviable mortal, ſurrounded as he is by relations who adore, and friends who eſteem him."

"And yet," replied Montgomery, tenderly taking her hand, "there is one ſupereminent bleſſing wanting, Miſs Belmont, for the completion of my felicity."

Anna, divining the nature of this bleſſing, continued ſilent; when, after waiting a

ſhort

ſhort time for her expected anſwer, he ſaid—

"Notwithſtanding I poſſeſs the love of Virtue's fairer ſelf, can I be truly happy unleſs this hand will generouſly ratify the bleſſing, and place the deprivation of it beyond all human poſſibility?"

"Nay," ſaid Anna, looking at him with a ſweet ſmile, "if you doubt its ſtability, it were ſurely better to aſcertain its conſtancy by a longer trial."

"Doubt its ſtability!" ſaid Montgomery, ſurpriſed at this miſconſtruction of his meaning, "I were indeed a ſceptic could I doubt a moment the veracity of Truth herſelf. No, my Anna, it was the uncertainty of human events made me wiſh for the realization of my happineſs; and could I have expreſſed a doubt, it would have been the fear that my own deſerts would have proved too inefficient to preſerve it."

This was the firſt time he had ever ventured to call her his Anna, and the tender appellation gladdened her heart with joy; but ſuppreſſing its ſenſations, ſhe replied—

"Then a longer trial proves eſſentially requiſite; as I am reſolved to be well acquainted with the ſolidity of the fundamental baſis, on which I am to found the fabric of happineſs, ere I venture to raiſe the delicate ſtructure; for I would not wiſh it to prove "the baſeleſs fabric of a viſion," which might ſuddenly be overthrown, "and leave not a wreck behind."

"Nor ſhall it!—By Heaven it ſhall not, if you will make me its aſſignee!" ſaid Montgomery. "Then let me entreat you to nominate me its careful guardian, and by naming an early day to make me happy, convince me that you do not doubt the ſincerity of my paſſion."

"A twelvemonth hence," ſaid the bluſhing Anna, "may ſurely prove that I do not heſitate at making Mr. Montgomery the truſtee of my future peace."

"Oh you have named an endleſs period!" ſaid Montgomery, "an immenſity of ſpace lies between, and may, long ere that arrives, ingulph every long anticipated hope! Then indeed, my Anna, you muſt date it earlier, for your brother has this moment agreed to receive me in the ſame character as ſoon as you could be prevailed upon to introduce me; which he kindly hoped might be ere long."

"Well then," ſaid Anna, "ſix months muſt be the boundary of your wiſhes."

"Impoſſible!" replied Montgomery emphatically. "Six years to a man in the ordinary purſuits of life would appear a much ſhorter lapſe of time: then indeed you muſt conſent to limit this indefinite period to a ſhorter date; for on my honour you never ſhall have reaſon to repent the day that you licenſe me to become your protector."

"I believe you," ſaid Anna, who could no longer withſtand his tender perſuaſions; "and to prove it, there is my hand, Mr. Montgomery, which I empower you to demand at the expiration of a quarter of the time."

"With what gratitude do I receive this earneſt of future untainted joys!" replied the delighted Montgomery. "But I muſt thank the ſource from whence thoſe tender accents flowed, that pronounced my ſentence."

tence." Saying which, he impreſſed thoſe lips with the ſignature of unalterable affection, that till this moment had never been touched by any mortal but her own family.

Anna deeply bluſhed at this unexpected ſalute; and whether ſhe was mentally diſpleaſed at it I cannot pretend to ſay, but with modeſt dignity ſhe ſaid—

"Do not, Mr. Montgomery, by a momentary forgetfulneſs, give me occaſion to repent of the confidence I have placed in you!"

"On my honour I never will!" rejoined Montgomery, who almoſt wiſhed to repeat the crime for the becoming offended modeſty with which ſhe reproved him; but riſing from his ſeat, he bowed over the hand that he ſtill retained, and ſaid that he would go and acquaint Lord Weſtbury that ſix weeks hence he was to be the happy man. He then quitted Anna's preſence; and though he had made her foreappoint the day that ſhe had previouſly agreed on, yet ſhe could not regret reſigning her liberty a few weeks earlier into the power of a man, whoſe conduct dignified his ſex.—

CHAP. XIII.

ANNA and Emmeline had ſlipped out of the parlour unperceived the next afternoon, and paſſing through the ſtudy, went into the avenue of trees, that they might interchange ſentiments free from interruption, and profit by the barter. But they had not walked long before they were met by Sir George juſt returning from Mr. Mortimer's, who, accoſting them as he approached with a look of inexpreſſible delight, ſaid—

"Love was juſt expreſſing a wiſh to fall in with Wit and Learning, and here he finds them happily in ſocial converſe together. But if the ſly urchin makes a requeſt, will Gravity and Vivacity grant him their promiſes of ſecrecy?"

"Take them," ſaid Anna, affectionately ſmiling, "for we engage to keep it as ſecret as the jewels within the undiſcovered mine."

"Humanity her private donations," continued Emmeline; "the gameſter, his fraudulent practices; the ſpendthrift heir, his prodigality from his father; Envy, the virtues of the envied; Charity, her neighbours' misfortunes; or, the ſordid miſer, his ſtores of hidden wealth."

Sir George then informed them that he had that morning finally adjuſted matters with Mr. Mortimer for his marriage with his amiable ward, who was to preſent him with her hand at the altar on the following morning; but that her timidity making her ſhrink from the idea of a public wedding, they had mutually agreed to ride over to Weſtbury before breakfaſt, for Percival to unite them; in conſequence of which determination ſhe had made him her ambaſſador, and commiſſioned him to treat with them on the terms of becoming her bride-maids."

"I liſten to this treaty with the ſincereſt pleaſure!" ſaid Anna; "but what plan can you produce, my dear Sir George, to enſure the ſecrecy required?"

He then told her that a little deception was neceſſary in the execution of it, for that he was ſecretly to beſpeak a poſt-chaiſe at

Montgomery for Mr. Mortimer and Euphraſia, when he was to tell his friends that an indiſpenſable engagement required his preſence in the country for a day or two, and ſet off from the Hall in another early in the morning, to accompany them; but that the only thing which puzzled him was, what pretext they could poſſibly form to leave the Hall on the ſame day, without exciting ſuſpicions.

Emmeline replied, that ſhe would eaſily obviate that difficulty, if he would only ſay, when ſhe was preſent in the evening, that he was going into the country the next morning; though ſhe hoped it was not his intention to take her away for a day or two, for if it was, ſhe ſhould take the liberty of declining the invitation.

"Not unleſs you intend to ſleep at Mr. Mortimer's," replied Sir George, ſmiling; "for that will be my country reſidence till I quit Wales."

"Oh your moſt obedient!" ſaid Emmeline, breaking from him, and ſtriving to conceal the ſlight tinge of modeſty on her cheek by laughing. "But I am now going, my dear Miſs Belmont, to make an excuſe to Lady Gertrude for leaving her to-morrow."

Anna begged ſhe would make her's at the ſame time, as ſhe was fearful that if ſhe attempted to ſpeak on the ſubject, her reproving conſcience would betray the ſecret. To this requeſt Emmeline very readily aſſented, and returning to the room, Lord Weſtbury advanced as ſhe entered, and taking her hand, ſaid with a ſmile—

"I have been endeavouring, Miſs Montgomery, "to elucidate the myſtery of the ſun's unuſual reſplendency; but could not ſucceed in my attempts till you kindly approached to prove, by again eclipſing it, that it was your abſence only that permitted it to ſhine."

After a ſhort time ſpent in general converſation, Emmeline pretended ſuddenly to recollect herſelf, and told Lady Gertrude that ſhe was going to be guilty of a breach of politeneſs on the following morning, with her Ladyſhip's permiſſion; for that having long ſince entered into an engagement with Miſs Howard, ſhe and Miſs Belmont had that day been called upon to perform it.

"And Miſs Belmont!" ſaid Montgomery.

"How are we to exiſt," rejoined the Earl, "a whole day without you?" Can we poſſibly ſuſtain ſo ſevere a froſt in the midſt of ſummer?"

Sir Hugh declared that if he did not love the three witches ſo well, as not to know which to prefer to the other, he would certainly have kept them ſpell-bound.

"If we have the inclination, Weſtbury," ſaid Mr. Montgomery, "we ſhall very ſhortly have it in our power to make theſe perverſe beauties repent their ill-timed cruelty; ſo ſuppoſe we mutually conſent to let them, for once, tranſgreſs the bounds of mercy?"

Without the leaſt ſuſpicion of the true nature of the engagement, the ſubject then dropped till after tea, when Anna leaving the apartment, Sir George ſoon afterwards told Sir Hugh, in a careleſs manner, that preſſing buſineſs called him into the country

try on the morrow, and he could not exactly name the time he ſhould return.

"I am ſorry for it!" replied Sir Hugh. "But pray what time in the morning do you begin your journey?"

Sir George anſwering that he had ordered a poſt-chaiſe to be at the door between ſix and ſeven in the morning, Emmeline aſked, with well-affected indifference, whether it would be convenient for him to ſet her and Miſs Belmont down at Mr. Mortimer's; for as they were commiſſioned to go early, they might as well improve the opportunity of going with him, and wholly avoid the inſufferable heat of the weather.

The gentlemen's carriages were inſtantly offered to convey them at their own time; but theſe polite tenders ſhe eaſily declined accepting, and ſucceeded ſo well in effecting the purpoſe of her manœuvres, that not the leaſt ſuſpicion was excited in any boſom as to the true intention of the deſign.

CHAP. XIV.

As it was neceſſary to dreſs very plain on this occaſion, to avoid any inferences being drawn from their unuſual appearance, when they returned in the evening; Anna and Emmeline deſcended to the parlour a few minutes after ſix, attired in ſimple muſlin dreſſes, and white chip hats and ribbons, where they had not ſat many minutes before the happy Sir George made his appearance, attended by the faithful Tomlins, who was the only one entruſted with this important ſecret.

Anna's ſoft eloquent eyes glittered with pellucid ſympathy as he entered; and riſing to receive his affectionate embrace, ſhe ſaid—

"May this auſpicious morn, my dear Sir George, prove the happy omen of your loves, and daily uſher in your felicity as brilliant and unclouded as itſelf."

"Oh Miſs Belmont," ſaid Emmeline, ſmiling, "you laviſh your wiſhes with ſuch unlimitted profuſion in that ſingle ſentence, that the ſtores of imagination cannot furniſh one that is not included! But, may you be as happy, Sir George, as I wiſh you; or, rather, as the intended Lady Belmont will ſtrive to make you!"

Sir George returned his acknowledgments more by his looks than his ſentiments, and conducted them to the chaiſe, that was waiting to receive them; when Tomlins jumping up behind, it quickly tranſported them to the humble manſion that contained a treaſure, more ineſtimable to Sir George than kingdoms, empires, or even worlds themſelves. The reſpectable Mr. Mortimer, who felt the fondeſt anxiety of the moſt tender father on this occaſion, was alone awaiting their arrival; and to ſay that he received them with pleaſure muſt needs be ſuperfluous. After the uſual ſalutations, Sir George eagerly enquired for his Euphraſia,

phraſia, when learning that ſhe had not yet deſcended from her dreſſing-room, Anna and Emmeline left the room; and gueſſing their intent, he begged that they would kindly ſolicit her to make haſte.

She had juſt completed her ſimply elegant attirement, when they entered to inſpire her ſinking ſpirits with fortitude; and, affectionately addreſſing her, Anna ſaid—

"I am this day to receive a ſiſter, a relation to whom I have long wiſhed to be allied, though my moſt ſanguine hopes did not paint one in ſo amiable a character as Euphraſia Howard."

"Oh grant, kind Heaven," ſaid Euphraſia, preſſing the offered hand of Affection between her's, "that in my new character I may never forfeit that eſteem which, as the friend of the lovely Anna, it has ever been my higheſt ambition to retain."

They then left the dreſſing-room, and entering the parlour, Euphraſia's appearance imparted no ſmall degree of pleaſure to the delighted Sir George, or even to the affectionate and honourable breaſt of her uncle and guardian—a title with which ſhe ſtill honoured the worthy Mr. Mortimer. After partaking of a ſlight breakfaſt, Sir George conducted her to the chaiſe, (the poſtillions having been previouſly enjoined to obſerve ſecrecy), and aſſiſting Mr. Mortimer alſo to enter, who, in the character of a father, was to preſent him with his Euphraſia at the altar, he afterwards ſtepped into the other with Anna and Emmeline, when together they ſet off for the Parſonage at Weſtbury.

As this morning's trip to matrimony does not exceed one long ſtage, and as poſtillions do not often ſpare their ſuffering horſes when their own advantage is in view, I ſhall leave my company on the road, and travel poſt to the once unfortunate, but now happy Mr. Edwin's, on purpoſe to give my readers a true ſcene of domeſtic felicity, ere my viſiters ruffle the calm ſerenity of pleaſure, which two years have changed into the ſoft flowing ſtream of mental happineſs, with the gently agitated tumults of unlooked-for joy; though it may not be unneceſſary to premiſe, that Percival had frequently ſeen all his friends ſince he had been inducted to the living of Weſtbury, except Anna, who had not hitherto ſeen him ſince his marriage, and was conſequently a ſtranger to Mrs. Edwin.

It wanted a quarter to eight when Percival, who was ſitting at his deſk, (where he always ſpent an hour before breakfaſt in preparing his excellent ſermons for the enſuing ſabbath, that no unexpected caſualty might deprive him of an opportunity) was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Edwin, who, advancing towards him, and laying her hand upon his ſhoulder, ſaid—

"How unremitting my worthy Edwin is in fulfilling the duties of his vocation; for I do not think that many in his ſituation would pay that ſtrict attention by choice, that he does."

"There are few who owe ſo much to a generous patron as I do," ſaid Percival, laying down his pen, and affectionately taking her hand; "for the noble Weſtbury not only gave me a genteel competency for a common act of humanity, but was the agent alſo through whoſe bounty I enjoy the endearing ſociety of my amiable Caroline—a bleſſing very few could have it in their power to beſtow."

"Here is poor farmer Hodgſon, Sir," ſaid a female ſervant, in the voice of pity, as ſhe opened the door, "who ſays you appointed him to call this morning."

"Let him come in, Hannah," ſaid Percival.

A clean-looking old man, whoſe head was ſilvered over with the hoary froſt of time, with his hat in one hand, and a ſtick which ſupported the venerable load of years in the other, now entered, and making a low bow, he eſſayed to ſpeak; but a tear ſtarting in his eye, rolled down the furrow of his aged cheek, and ſealed his lips in ſilence.

Percival advanced, and kindly taking him by the hand, led him to a chair, in which, with ſome entreaty, he prevailed upon him to ſit, ſaying—

"Misfortunes, my worthy friend, are the inſtruments of Heaven, with which it proves the fortitude of thoſe that by the world are generally eſtimated virtuous;—but, with calamity in one hand, it holds out mercy in the other, of which your caſe is a ſignal inſtance: for though your little farm is laid waſte by fire, your wife and children have providentially eſcaped uninjured. But as in your preſent diſtreſs you muſt neceſſarily need aſſiſtance, you will find in this little box a trifle for your preſent relief."

The poor man gratefully accepted it, little thinking that it was worth ten pounds; when Percival telling him that a brief would be read in the Church for his farther aſſiſtance, which, if his ſermon had the effect he wiſhed it, he hoped might replace his loſs, he left him with tears of gratitude, to communicate his generoſity to his ancient and worthy wife.

It has ever been remarked, that the ſenſation ariſing from doing a good action is more gratefully pleaſing to the boſom, than the one whoſe wounds of ſorrow are cured by receiving it. This might be the caſe with the noble-minded Percival; for he and his amiable Caroline now ſat down to breakfaſt in the higheſt ſtate of mortal felicity.

They were ſoon, however, interrupted by the door opening, and aſtoniſhed to ſee Mr. Mortimer and Euphraſia enter. Mrs. Edwin's cheeks fluſhed with pleaſure, for Euphraſia's dreſs portrayed the occaſion of the viſit; whilſt Percival, with looks of delight, affectionately welcomed them, and led them to receive his wife's tender ſalutations.

The kind embraces and warm felicitations of this happy meeting were ſcarcely over, before the bell announced the arrival of Sir George and the two bride-maids: but as in meetings of this nature it is impoſſible to write down, even in compendious characters, the various congratulations that flow in the full tide of joy from every tongue, I ſhall merely pay attention to the ſentiments expreſſed by them who had been the longeſt period of time ſtrangers to each other.

"To have the pleaſure of again perſonally addreſſing Miſs Belmont," ſaid Percival, taking her hand as ſhe entered, "is indeed an unexpected happineſs."

"And mine is increaſed by the occaſion of it," ſaid the elegant Anna, "as we have come to make Mr. Edwin's the inſtrument of conferring that happineſs on others which I have now the pleaſure of congratulating him on poſſeſſing in its moſt amiable character."

Her eyes were directed to Mrs. Edwin as ſhe concluded; and Mr. Mortimer's as well as Percival's ſparkled with gratitude at a ſentiment ſo flattering to their feelings. He then led her to Mrs. Edwin, and introduced her as the young lady whoſe name ſhe had frequently heard him mention.

"I concluded it could be no other," ſaid Mrs. Edwin; "and if Miſs Belmont will, when more intimately acquainted, favour me with that eſteem her friends are ſo proud of poſſeſſing, I ſhall acknowledge the obligation with the greateſt gratitude."

"Indeed, my dear Madam," ſaid Anna, "it will be none; for, from the deſcription of my friends," added ſhe, looking round her with a ſmile, "I have long anticipated this opportunity of offering it: but had that not been the caſe, Mrs. Edwin's own claims would have been ſo evident a demonſtration of her right to it, that without heſitation I ſhould have voluntarily given it up on this firſt introduction."

This happy party then partook of the breakfaſt they had kept waiting, which by ſome was thought a long, by others a ſhort repaſt;—but the equipage at length being removed, Mr. Edwin walked to the Church to be ready to receive them; and re-entering the carriages in the ſame manner as they had done before, they ſhortly after followed him.

The day, beguiled by infinite happineſs, ſlipped imperceptibly away, and the evening cloſing in, they bade adieu to the Parſonage of Virtue; when Sir George and Lady Belmont in one carriage, Mr. Mortimer, Anna, and Emmeline, in the other, returned to a manſion, which though more humble, contained the ſame unaſſuming worth; where, after partaking of an elegant but frugal ſupper, and diſcharging the laſt duties in their official characters, as bride-maids, Anna and Emmeline, after engaging to preſerve their ſecrecy for a day or two, bade farewel to Mr. Mortimer, &c. and returned to the Hall, eſcorted by a ſervant, to illuminate with pleaſure the eyes of Montgomery and the Earl of Weſtbury.

CHAP. XV.

A NOVEL writer has been compared to a ſtory-teller; becauſe ſhe relates untruths with the deſign of deceiving, and is never better pleaſed than when ſhe ſucceeds in the attempt. She may be likened to a painter; becauſe ſhe portrays the features of human-kind, and clothes the figures with the drapery of her own fancy. She is an angler; for her productions too often prove the bait that weak minds greedily catch at, and ſwallow deſtruction: for inſtead of making vice diſguſting, ſhe too generally conceals the bearded hook with ſuch a faſcinating appearance of pleaſure, that the deluded creature ſnatches the glittering bait, and either lives a prey to anguiſh, or daringly dives into infamy. She is, finally, a hypocrite; for ſhe diſguiſes her ſentiments with the moſt refined art, till ſhe can anſwer her own purpoſe by diſcloſing them:—and I, who long ſince told my readers that they muſt wait till the hand of Time unrolled the myſtic pages of the book of Fate, (though I was then in poſſeſſion of the ſecret), ere they could diſcover whom Euphraſia Howard was to be; I have no ſooner preſented her in the character of Lady Belmont, than I declare ſhe has no pretenſions to the title! But as I cannot juſt at preſent conſent to drop the maſk I have ſo long wore, I muſt leave their opinions entangled in ſuſpenſe, whilſt I introduce her at the Hall once more by the appellation of Miſs Howard.

As her friends had promiſed not to reveal the ſecret with which they were entruſted, ſhe walked over to the Hall the next morning, to avoid the merry jeſts of Sir Hugh, that ſhe knew would be levied at her if he ſuppoſed that ſhe ſtaid away on account of Sir George Belmont's abſence; but on entering, a conſcious bluſh ſuffuſed her countenance, occaſioned I ſuppoſe by the delicate ſuſceptibility of her conſcience, that was hurt by the knowledge of the deception ſhe was practiſing on her friends;—but whatever ſenſation it might be that produced this effect, it was certainly not leſſened by the compliment Montgomery paid her; for he ſaid, with a ſmile, as he offered her his chair—

"The roſes, envious of ſeeing their modeſty excelled, Miſs Howard, have ſurely combined in a charming revenge, and centered all their bluſhing beauties in your face this morning."

"Indeed you miſtake, Mr. Montgomery," ſaid Lady Gertrude, ſmiling; "for the ſun, aſtoniſhed at ſeeing ſo much elegance abroad thus early, ſent his enquiring beams to recognize her face; but enamoured of their reſidence, they would not chuſe to quit their ſtation!"

"How unkind it is of you elegant flatterers," retorted Emmeline, "to torture Modeſty with ſuch unwelcome praiſes; when if you would but pay them to me, they would be received with unbluſhing effrontery!"

They ſmiled at her confeſſion, that experience had taught them was very weakly defended by veracity; but Anna entering into converſation with Euphraſia, they took the hint, and ſtarted general topics; which game was purſued by ſome with eagerneſs, others were thrown out, and Lady Belmont *incog.* contented herſelf with falling in at the cloſe. But an unfortunate circumſtance ſoon made them alter the courſe they were purſuing; for Emmeline, taking out her handkerchief, unluckily dropped the favour from the pocket where ſhe had concealed it the preceding evening, and the treacherous white and ſilver knot, as it fell to the ground, caught the attention of the Earl of Weſtbury, who chanced to be ſitting next her. He picked it up unperceived by the company, or even Emmeline herſelf; and happy at being ſo accidentally initiated into the order of ſecrecy, he ſoon ſought an opportunity of walking to the farther end of the room, to inveſt himſelf with the badge of honour; which he had no ſooner done, than he returned with the greateſt compoſure imaginable to his former ſtation. As he was taking his ſeat, however, the fatal ribbon attracted Emmeline's eye, and burſting into an immoderate fit of laughter, ſhe hid her face with her handkerchief, exclaiming—

"When Aſſurance viſited mankind, I vow it was in the character of the confident Earl of Weſtbury!"

The attention of the company was inſtantly attracted, and Anna, catching a glimpſe of the fatal cauſe of her friend's merriment, gave Euphraſia a look, which ſhe had but juſt time to literally conſtrue, before Sir Hugh, ſtarting from his ſeat, and rubbing his hands, exclaimed, as he took the bluſhing Euphraſia's—

"Ha! ha! my little Gipſey, ſo you have been miſleading our ſenſes, and putting us upon the wrong ſcent, whilſt you run away with the game!"

As her countenance corroborated, and ſhe did not pretend to confute the accuſation, ſhe was immediately congratulated as Lady Belmont by all parties; but as their compliments were expreſſed with refined elegance, ſhe received their congratulations with modeſt dignity, and could not feel chagrined at the revelation of the truth.

Sir George ſoon after entering the apartment, *bon-mots* from the *belle-eſprits* were levied at him with laviſh profuſion, on his urgent buſineſs in the country; but wellſkilled in the ſcience of ſelf-defence, he parried their blows with admirable dexterity, till a letter being brought in for him, entirely averted them, as he begged permiſſion to examine its contents, not having the leaſt knowledge of the hand-writing.

It proved, on examination, a letter from the executor of Lord Summerfield, who had fallen a martyr to the ſciatica—a diſeaſe with which he had long ſince been troubled. Having never been married, they found, on opening his will, that he, Sir George Belmont, was the lawful heir of Eliſmere Caſtle, and its poſſeſſions, as alſo to the title of Lord Summerfield. He then ſtated, that the late Lord expreſſed great regret for having ſo long lived in enmity with his only relatives, and that to make ſome reparation for the neglect with which he had ever treated him, he had bequeathed him the whole of his ſpecie, amounting to one hundred and fifty thouſand pounds; and the letter concluded with a deſire that he would go down, as ſoon as he could poſſibly make it convenient, to take poſſeſſion of the eſtate.

Having never known his uncle, Sir George could not be expected to feel more for his deceaſe than humanity indiſcriminately feels for all; and after recovering from the ſurpriſe this unexpected caſualty neceſſarily occaſioned, he communicated the ſubſtance of it to the company, when every heart participated with the ſympathy of friendſhip and affection in the happineſs of this fortunate couple; whilſt every tongue, in the eloquent language of ſincerity, wiſhed them joy on their acceſſion to the title, and the brilliant opening of their morn of matrimony. But as the two gentlemen who ſtill retained the ſingular title of bachelors, againſt their inclinations, felt no deſire to have the day protracted on which they were to change it, Mr. Montgomery took an opportunity, as they were ſitting round the table after dinner, to expreſs a wiſh that this event might not, beyond the limitted time, procraſtinate the morning appointed to make him happy.

"By Heavens it muſt not!" ſaid the Earl, "or I ſhall follow my friend's example, and take a ſecret trip to Mr. Edwin's."

Sir Hugh declared it muſt not be; but Anna objecting, he entreated it might not be deferred a day later than the ſixteenth of October, which was the day of Archibald's nativity. The gentlemen aſſented very unwillingly even to this ſhort delay; but it being at length finally agreed on, Lord and Lady Summerfield took leave of their friends, promiſing to reviſit them prior to the morn of happineſs, and returned to Mr. Mortimer's, from whence they ſet out the next morning to take poſſeſſion of Eliſmere Caſtle.

It was agreed that the approaching nuptials ſhould be performed in a private manner: the chapel on the left wing of the Hall was therefore to be uſed for the occaſion, and preparations in every other department were executed by the hand of taſte. The party was to conſiſt of the following friends:—the two Miſs Fitzormonds, who were to be Anna's bridemaids; Lady Louiſa Sudbury, and Miſs Orford, who were to act in the ſame capacity to Emmeline; Sir John Newent, and Sir William Fitzhenry, who was paying the latter gentleman a viſit for the ſhooting and hunting ſeaſon; the Honourable Mr. Warrington, and Mr. Pensford.

Lord and Lady Summerfield, with their elegant ſuite, arrived on the Thurſday, when his Lordſhip preſented Anna with fifty thouſand pounds; but that the noble Montgomery, with unprecedented generoſity, obſtinately perſiſted in ſettling entirely on her and her children, alledging that when he ſought her in marriage, it was not in the hope of fortune, for that without it ſhe was ſo ineſtimable, that numbers could not compute its value, nor any wealth purchaſe.

CHAP. XVI.

FRIDAY morn! With what fearful, diſtruſtful, timorous anxiety do I commence a chapter, where every power of deſcription is neceſſary to be exerted to make it at all reſemble the original! but as my readers are, no doubt, in haſte to ſee the concluſion of this eventful hiſtory, I muſt ſummon a little aſſurance to my aid in the execution of the performance, and entreat, that inſtead of viewing it with judgment, they will kindly revert the glaſs, and encourage me to proceed by regarding it with mercy.

The ſtars, abaſhed at opening day, reluctantly began to yield to ſuperior power; but as if unwilling to reſign their exalted dominion, they now and then reſumed freſh courage, and twinkled with rekindled animation; at length overpowered, they ſhrunk imperceptibly into a temporary obſcurity. The ſun triumphant, like a generous enemy, concealed his victory with modeſt baſhfulneſs till their defeat was ſomewhat forgotten, when caſting off the bluſhing diſguiſe, he proceeded on his glorious career with unequalled reſplendency, awaking with his beams the laborious ſons of Induſtry. Not a ſingle vapour aſcended from the earth, to fall again in tears on this auſpicious day; and the little vocal performers of the neighbouring wood, as if conſcious of the happineſs awaiting their benefactreſſes, ſallied through the ambient air to greet them as they roſe with their morning carols.

All Nature in tuneful concord appeared anxious to reſemble the harmony of the feelings of the deſtined brides. Sir Hugh beheld the realization of his long-anticipated hopes near at hand; and whilſt rejoicing in their completion, he alſo felt the anxiety of a tender father. Lady Gertrude was going to ſee her brother happy, and with the ſympathy of affection ſhe was equally ſo herſelf. Lord Summerfield, who had ever loved his elegant ſiſter to the greateſt extent of fraternal tenderneſs, beheld her at laſt arrived at the goal of happineſs, and could not define his pleaſure at the event: the amiable Euphraſia rejoiced at her ſucceſs with the true ſincerity of friendſhip. The Earl of Weſtbury had once loved Anna, but his offers had been rejected; and the kind Emmeline appearing far more charming in his eyes for receiving them with affection, he looked forward to the ſolemnization of the ceremony with infinite delight. Montgomery felt doubly happy; for Anna, lovely, elegant, beautiful, and accompliſhed, with the hand of Virtue had wiped away the prejudiced ſhade from the glaſs through which he had formerly regarded womankind; in conſequence of which ſhe had ſo augmented his felicity, by affording him the means of witneſſing the genuine goodneſs of her heart, and the noble expanſion of her ſoul, that he anxiouſly awaited the moment that might authorize him to commence a life of the moſt ſincere affection and eſteem, to prove his gratitude for the obligation.

Emmeline, when ſhe roſe in the morning, felt a little regret at the thoughts of quitting her family, but the Earl's ſoothing attention ſoon made her forget it; and Anna, although ſhe felt awed at the numerous duties which ſhe would be ſhortly called upon to perform; yet, as ſhe had been well inſtructed in the leſſon of domeſtic felicity by the conduct of her own parents, ſhe prepared herſelf to engage in them with pleaſing ſerenity; and the recollection of her former ſorrows gave ſuch a zeſt to her preſent felicity, that it was literally indefinable—it was of too complicated and exalted a nature to be reduced into ſyſtems, or expreſſed in any language but the ſilent language of the heart.

After dinner they retired to their reſpective dreſſing-rooms, to prepare for the reception of their company; and Sir Hugh, the Earl, and the elegant Montgomery had been anxiouſly waiting in the parlour for ſome time before any of the ladies made their appearance. Lord Summerfield, however, at length entered, leading in his Lady and ſiſter; Emmeline and Lady Gertrude quickly followed.

The company ſoon after arriving, repaired to the chapel, where the worthy Mr. Mortimer, who had previouſly been requeſted to perform the ceremony, was waiting to receive them. It had formerly been a very elegant ſtructure, but from being the only part of the Hall that had not undergone ſome repair, the ravages of Time were now conſpicuous in many parts; though as the wax tapers, with which it was on this occaſion illuminated, diffuſed but a partial light, the ruins were not diſcernible; but if they had, I doubt whether they would have been obſerved by the preſent company, as their attentions were too deeply engaged by the lovely Anna, whoſe ſuſceptible feelings were ſo greatly affected at the awful ſolemnity of the ceremony, rendered ſtill more ſo by the excellent manner in which the ſervice was read, that, nearly fainting, ſhe was obliged to be ſupported by her amiable bride-maids, the Miſs Fitzormonds, whilſt Montgomery with tender anxiety was watching her pallid countenance, fearful that her indiſpoſition would ſtill arreſt the completion of his happineſs:—this was, however, very fortunately not the caſe, for with the greateſt exertions to recover herſelf, ſhe did ſucceed in going through the ceremony without abſolutely fainting.

Emmeline betrothed her plighted vows, and received the Earl's, without ſuffering ſimilar pain; although ſhe might mentally experience the ſame ſenſations, her conſtitution was leſs delicate than Anna's, which for the laſt four years had been reduced by repeated afflictions, ſo that it varied in proportion as her feelings were more or leſs affected.

The ceremony at length concluded, the happy bridegrooms and charming brides received the affectionate congratulations of their relatives and friends; which were no ſooner paid, than the Earl and Counteſs of Weſtbury, accompanied by Lady Gertrude de Montfort, took leave, and immediately ſet off for their ſeat at Weſtbury—an elegant manſion, in the middle of a beautiful and extenſive park, ſituated within three miles of the happy Percival's.

Tea and coffee were ſcarcely over before a duet upon flutes in the adjoining apartment attracted their attention, and which was executed with ſuch maſterly ſkill, that not a whiſper was heard till it was finally concluded, when the ſounds retreating, the doors were thrown open, and diſcloſed the muſic-room, brilliantly illuminated, with inſtruments of various kinds ſet in due order for a private concert. This was immediately reſorted to, as the company were all performers, except Mr. Pensford, Miſs Orford, and Sir Hugh, who were equally pleaſed to liſten; and vocal and inſtrumental harmony prevailed till they were ſummoned to attend the ſupper-room, which was very ſpacious and elegant, ornamented with the richeſt furniture, in the centre of which ſtood a table elegantly ſpread with an extenſive ſervice of plate, and every diſh concealed with ſilver covers, that when taken off diſplayed every dainty of which the moſt luxurious could wiſh to partake. The lovely heroine of this hiſtory was placed at the upper end of it, though with no other intent than to converſe with the admiring and admired object whoſe name ſhe had juſt aſſumed; Lady Summerfield ſat on her left hand, and did the honours of it; whilſt the delighted Sir Hugh at the lower end, ſtrove to make all around him as happy as himſelf.

The band of a regiment quartered in the neighbouring town, had been procured, that every ſenſe might be charmed. Several capital pieces were performed during ſupper, which was no ſooner over than ſongs and elegant converſation completed the pleaſure of this happy ſociety.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

AFTER having ſpent a week at the Hall in receiving company, Montgomery propoſed to Sir Hugh and Lord Summerfield that they ſhould, ſoon after breakfaſt on the following morning, ſet out in company together to take a view of an eſtate he had lately purchaſed, at which ſeat he ſhould requeſt the favour of their company for a week or two. Sir Hugh was ſurpriſed at this invitation, having never received the ſlighteſt intimation of his ſon's proceedings in this affair; but concluding he had ſome commendable intention in view, having ſo long preſerved the ſecret cloſe confined within the honourable ſanctuary of his own boſom, he readily accepted it; and Lord and Lady Summerfield, it may eaſily be conjectured, were not unwilling to follow in the purſuit of happineſs when Montgomery and Anna were in company.

Anna of courſe made preparations for the journey with pleaſure, for every place was to her a paradiſe where Montgomery was preſent; the carriages and attendants being ready at the appointed hour, they ſhortly after drove from the Hall with hearts as happy as virtue, love, and fortune could make them.

As I am no ſorcereſs, I cannot conſequently be ſuppoſed to know all that paſſes in the different carriages at the ſame time; and as I enjoy the ſpecial privilege of chuſing my own company, which in any ſituation I eſteem no inconſiderable advantage, I ſhall, guided by the wiſh of imparting pleaſure to others, take my ſeat in the corner of Montgomery's, in which the lovely Anna had not travelled many miles before ſome familiar ſcenes attracting her eye, introduced ſuch a variety of ideas to her imagination, that, unable to receive them in ſuch overwhelming abundance, it diſtilled them from her eyes in liquid pearls.

"What ails my Anna?" ſaid Montgomery, with one hand tenderly taking her's as he put his other arm round her waiſt.

"Oh Montgomery," ſhe replied, "I fear your goodneſs will be inſupportable!" She was unable to proceed; for already divining his intention, the tenderneſs that had deſigned it was ſo demonſtrative a proof of his attachment, that ſhe was too much affected to give a voice to her ſilent reflections. He was hurt at the melting ſenſibility diſſolved by her beautiful eye, the agitation of her ſpirits manifeſted in her expreſſive features; and in the ſoothing accents of love he replied—

"Do not, my beloved Anna, be ſo much affected at a circumſtance I hoped would give you pleaſure."

"Oh who that comes within the influence of your diffuſive generoſity," ſaid Anna, preſſing his hand to her lips as ſhe raiſed her head from the ſhoulder on which it had been reclined, "can flouriſh beneath its bliſs-imparting benignity, and not be affected with gratitude for the indefinable happineſs it diſpenſes? And though paſt occurrences combine to mingle the infuſion of bitter retroſpection with my preſent potion of felicity, yet the admiration effected by witneſſing the expanded liberality of the noble Montgomery's ſoul, renders it a pleaſing draught, though at the ſame time it depreſſes my ſpirits, by depriving me of the power of communicating my grateful ſentiments."

"By Heaven none are due!" replied Montgomery, "for all that the moſt tender affection has already done, or can poſſibly perform in future, will never prove an equivalent for the obligation my Anna conferred, when ſhe beſtowed on the thrice happy Montgomery her hand and heart."

Anna's attention was now arreſted by a ſingular circumſtance; the Summerfield carriage driving up to the ſide of their's, and the glaſſes being down, Lord Summerfield, with a delighted look of enthuſiaſtic pleaſure, waved his hand, exclaiming—

"Montgomery, you are a noble fellow!" The carriage then fell back, giving Montgomery's the precedency. But ſurpriſed at the uncommon manner in which this addreſs was preſented, Anna looked out of the carriage to diſcover the occaſion of it, when, gueſs her feelings at perceiving herſelf within ſight of her native home, and every inhabitant of its neighbouring village, with features dreſſed in ſmiles of joy, and perſons attired in entire new ſuits of cloaths, approaching to meet them, amongſt whom the widow and her four children were not the leaſt conſpicuous figures; for the noble Montgomery had taken upon himſelf to be Anna's banker ſince ſhe had been unfortunately ſeparated from them, and had maintained them in a ſtate far from the reach of want.

This ſcene was too affecting to be regarded with inſenſate indifference, and it repreſented Montgomery in a character ſo exalted, that overcome with pleaſure, pain, ſurpriſe, and joy, Anna reſeated herſelf, and burſt into tears.

Montgomery endeavoured to ſooth her with the moſt tender attentions, and happily ſucceeded before the villagers came up; but a ſcene now preſented itſelf that even ſhook his fortitude,—for theſe honeſt children of Labour, Induſtry, and Simplicity, who at firſt derived the bleſſings they now enjoyed from the Belmont family, were ſo rejoiced at Anna's return to the Lodge as its miſtreſs, after ſo long an abſence, that they could not—no, it was impoſſible—expreſs their feelings. If tumult, however, could have deſcribed them, the loud repeated huzzas of the men, who joyfully reiterated their plaudits, would have been eloquently deſcriptive;—but the women, in ſofter tones, and in characters that more intelligibly proclaimed to Montgomery the goodneſs of his Anna's heart, and the love with which ſhe was regarded, evinced their pleaſure and happineſs on this occaſion; for many of them in tears, and others with ſmiles of joy, welcomed her to the Lodge with ſentiments of undiſguiſed ſincerity, and bleſſed her for the beſt of ladies, whilſt the children united with their parents in congratulating her.

The horſes, now taken from the carriages, and decked with boughs, were ſent on to the ſtables, whilſt the villagers taking their places, proceeded to conduct Sir Hugh and the two happy couple in triumph to the gates of Belmont Lodge, which, when they had ſucceeded in doing, they formed themſelves into a ſemi-circle till they had alighted.

They had no ſooner ſtepped from their carriages than loud acclamations rent the air, and a gentle gale wafting them to heaven, they were there recorded, to teſtify the virtues of thoſe to whom they had been offered. Peace being at length reſtored, the gentlemen advanced with their reſpective brides, who were equally affected, and thanked them for this faithful proof of unſhaken affection, depoſiting in the hands of their chief a very handſome ſum of money, to be equally divided amongſt them; whilſt the delighted Sir Hugh graciouſly ſhook hands with many of them, hoping that whilſt he ſtaid in their neighbourhood, they ſhould get better acquainted.

The villagers honoured them with another ſalute in gratitude for their bounty, and retreated in good order to a temporary erection, raiſed for the purpoſe, where an excellent ſubſtantial dinner, and plenty of the beſt ale was prepared for them. The lovely Anna, conducted by her affectionate huſband, and attended by her deareſt relatives, entered that noble manſion, and was welcomed by thoſe faithful ſervants from whom ſhe had parted ſome time before, afflicted with the idea of never again ſeeing them. But a merciful Providence ſuperintends the reſidence of Virtue!

CHAP. XVIII.

AFTER ſuffering the keeneſt pangs of diſappointed love—after enduring the pains and liſtleſſneſs of a lingering illneſs—and after loſing, within one pityleſs twelvemonth, the authors of her exiſtence, the tender guardians of her infant age, and the ſincere friends of her riper years,—we at length ſee the virtuous Anna happy in the fulleſt enjoyment of mortal felicity; protected by a tender huſband in the elegant and honourable Archibald Montgomery; adored by a noble brother, and the amiable partner of his affections; beloved by a ſecond father in the delighted, undiſguiſed, and open-hearted Sir Hugh; eſteemed by Lady Gertrude de Montfort, the Earl, and affectionate Counteſs of Weſtbury; admired by her friends, venerated by the neighbouring villagers, and almoſt worſhipped by her faithful domeſtics.

After ſpending ſome weeks with the happy poſſeſſors of Belmont Lodge, Sir Hugh Montgomery and Lord and Lady Summerfield took leave of them, and returned to their reſpective ſeats, to follow their example, by rejoicing the hearts of their tenants and dependants with old Engliſh hoſpitality; and the poor families for a wide extent round Elſmere Caſtle, ever had reaſon to bleſs the day that its preſent inhabitants took poſſeſſion of it. The good old Mr. Mortimer became their Chaplain, and was allowed a very liberal ſtipend by Lord Summerfield, in gratitude for the bleſſings he had conferred on him in Euphraſia; he was treated with the tender attention and reſpect his virtues merited, and he lived a life of eaſe, content, cheerfulneſs, and piety.

The houſe at Twickenham was purchaſed of the Earl of Weſtbury, and the furniture it contained of Lord Summerfield, by Sir William Fitzhenry, who had lately married Lady Iſabella Gordon; and the faithful Anthony, with the reſt of the domeſtics, returned to the Lodge, when, as they grew too advanced in years to perform the neceſſary duties of their ſtations, the noble Montgomery placed them in ſmall farms, in reward for their former ſervices to his Anna and her predeceſſors.

Lady Gertrude de Montfort, after ſpending the Chriſtmas with her new ſiſter, to whom ſhe became, by a more intimate acquaintance, ſtill more affectionately attached, took a circuit, and ſpent a week at each of the different eſtates; after which ſhe returned to the metropolis, where ſhe had the pleaſure of ſeeing her friends every winter, and generally ſpent a month with each of them during the ſummer.

Percival and Mrs. Edwin were frequent viſiters at Weſtbury Park.

The Honourable Captain Macartney had been called into ſervice, and promoted to a Majority; and Mr. Douglas, having returned to pay his family a viſit, accidentally met with the young lady, in the character of a widow, to whom he had formerly paid his addreſſes at Dumfries; when his preconceived proteſtations of forgetting her being baniſhed by the recollection of his former attachment, he again renewed his attentions with renovated affection, and ſucceeded.

Having now enumerated all thoſe who have made any conſpicuous figure in this hiſtory, and neither finding it poſſible to deduct from their preſent felicity, nor yet to augment their happineſs, I muſt bid adieu to them, and the lovely Anna; who,

extricated

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extricated from all her misfortunes, I at laſt ſee in poſſeſſion of that reward her virtue and unſhaken conſtancy ſo highly merit. And would my readers tread the paths of honour with the ſame ſteady perſeverance, and ſupport difficulties with equal fortitude, they would at leaſt experience the ſame happineſs in a guileleſs conſcience, and, I doubt not, meet a ſimilar recompence as that which Anna and her brother enjoyed.

By them, with mildneſs, keeneſt pangs were borne,
Till pitying angels pluck'd out ſorrow's thorn,
With Lethean waters heal'd the wound of pain,
And ſtrew'd with flow'rs their paths of life again.

FINIS.

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